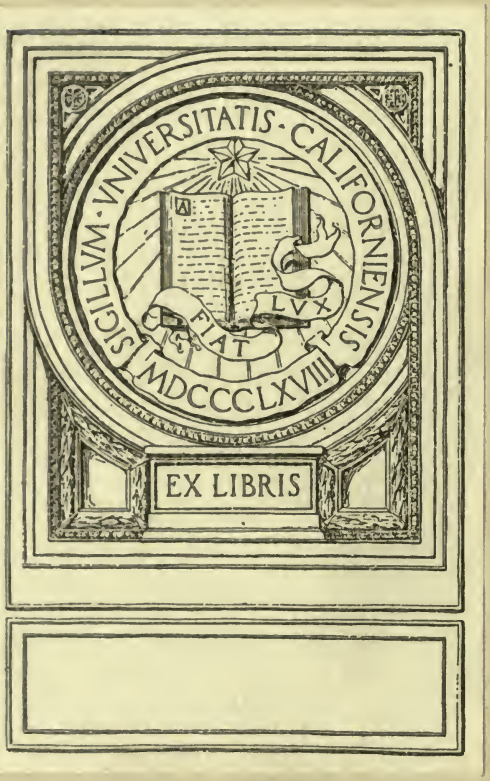
My own affairs

By THE PRINCESS LOUISE OF BELGIUM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MY OWN AFFAIRS

By The Princess Louise of Belgium

With Photogravure Frontispiece and Eight Plates

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Translated by Maude M. C. ffoulkes

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I DEDICATE

THIS BOOK TO

the Great Man, to the Great King, who was

MY FATHER

466573

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My Own Affairs

CHAPTER I

Why I Write this Book

AS the eldest daughter of a great man and a great King, whose magnificent intelligence has enriched his people, I owe nothing but misfortune to my royal origin. Ever since I was born I have suffered and been deceived. I have idealized Life too much.

In the evening of my days I do not wish to remain under the cloud of the false impression which is now prevalent concerning me.

Without desiring to allude too much to the past, and to retrace the road of my Calvary, I should like at least to borrow a few pages from my memories and reflections, inspired by events which have destroyed thrones in whose proximity I once lived. The Emperor of Austria, the German Emperor, the Tsar of Bulgaria were all familiar figures to me.

Driven to Munich by the War, then to Budapest, taken prisoner for a brief space by Hungarian Bolshevists, I have survived the European tempest, and I have seen all those who disowned and crushed me, beaten and punished.

And I trembled every day for my poor Belgium, so strong in her courage and her travail, but so unjust to me—oh no, not the *people*—the good people are naturally heroic and indefatigable. I refer to certain of their leaders, who have been misled on my account, and who are also, perhaps, too fond of money. Unjust themselves, they all equally violated justice by illicit interests which had the appearance of legality, as well as by the false attitude which appeared merely to be forgetfulness, but which was actually ingratitude.

My father has not yet had a monument erected to him in the country which he esteemed so highly; his Government has remembered the follies of his old age rather than its privileges, and his memory has suffered accordingly.

But what is past is past. My memory remains faithfully and affectionately attached to my native land; my sole thought is to love and honour her.

It is of Belgium that I wish to speak before passing on to the Courts of Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Sofia, and to the many doings which these names recall, certain of which deserve better knowledge and consideration.

I have never entertained any feelings for Belgium other than those of imperishable affection. The most painful of my reflections during the horrible war was that she was more to be pitied than I was.

On the day when I was being searched by Hungarian Bolshevists at Budapest I heard one of them say to another—having proved for himself the simplicity to

which I was reduced: "Here is a king's daughter who is poorer than I am." I have thought of the unhappy women of Ypres, of Dixmude, of France, Poland, Servia, and elsewhere—unfortunate creatures without fire or bread through the crime of war, and I have wept for them and not for myself.

More than one of them, perhaps, envied my position before 1914; little did they realize that I should have preferred theirs!

Married at seventeen, I expected to find in marriage the joys that a husband and children can give. I have had bitter proof to the contrary.

Rupture was inevitable where my own intimate feelings were concerned and those who surrounded me. I was too independent to make use of what was offensive to me.

Honours are often without honour, however high they may seem to be. Save for rare exceptions, fortune and power only develop in us the appetite for pleasure and urge us to depravity. Those whom La Bruyère calls "the Great" easily lose the knowledge of human conditions. Life is to them no longer the mysterious proof of the existence of a soul which will be eventually rewarded or punished according to its deserts. Religion seems to them only a mask or an instrument.

Led to judge their fellow-creatures through the flatteries, calculations, ambitions and treacheries by which they are surrounded, they arrive, through mistrust of human nature, at a state of indifference to God, and they

accommodate His laws to their needs in the assurance of adjusting themselves with the Creator as they adjust their doings with their ministers.

When I review the past, and when I am reminded of the various phases of my unhappy existence, I never despair of ultimately finding a justice which I have not yet come across in this world; I have always believed that it exists *somewhere*. If it were not so, things would be inconceivable.

I owe this spirit of confidence to the lessons I learnt in my infancy, chiefly from those taught me by the Queen, my mother. "Always endeavour to be a Christian," she used to say. I could not understand the import of these words when I was a child, but the misfortunes of my life have helped to explain them.

Stirred into revolt by humanity in so many ways, I have now submitted myself to a Superior Will, and I know the happiness of not hating my enemies. Pardon has always followed my rebellion.

I have never doubted that those who wronged me would be punished sooner or later on earth or elsewhere, and I have been sorry for my persecutors.

I have pitied them for their dislike of my frankness, because I am an enemy of all family and Court hypocrisy —I have pitied them for having censured my fidelity to one affection, and, above all, I have pitied their exaggeration of my disregard for that ancient idol—money!

Convinced as I was, and not without foundation, that immense wealth was to come, not only to myself but to

my sisters, I maintained that our duty was to make full use of our resources. Was it not better to circulate money and assist trade? This opinion, however, was not shared either by a husband who was inclined to hoard or by a family who were afraid of any fresh ideas or customs, and who only saw in the aspirations of the masses an inevitable and horrible catastrophe against which they ought to protect themselves by saving as much as possible.

At the same time, when I have been engaged in a struggle I have never met with anything save cruel treatment on the part of my enemies (first and foremost by the slanders intended to ruin me in the eyes of the world), but I have hurled myself at the onset against all the obstacles which violence and enmity have conceived against me.

Being unable to live and act normally, and compelled by force and privations to treat what I held as despicable with obedience and respect, I lacked the means of existence to which I was entitled. The trouble I took in order to assure myself of my liberty on my native soil, in the order and dignity for which I had hoped, was nullified by those who were themselves morally responsible for it. I was compelled to become a prisoner or a fugitive, taken away and kept away from my rightful position by difficulties of every description. By these methods my enemies imagined that I should be more easily deprived of all to which I had clung.

What would have become of me had I not found a man who devoted himself to saving me from all kinds of

snares and dangers, and who found devoted beings to second him—many of whom have sprung from the humbler ranks of life—I am unable to conjecture.

If I have known the wickedness of an aristocracy devoid of nobility, I have also benefited by the most chivalrous delicacy which has been extended to me by the populace, and my recognition of this is chiefly what I wish to write about to-day.

But deep in my heart I have the impelling desire not to allow the legend which has been created around me and my name to exist any longer.

CHAPTER II

My Beloved Belgium; my Family and Myself; Myself—as I Know Myself

IF in an official procession the principal personage comes last, then Belgium should come last in my pages, for it is about myself that I must begin.

I decide to do so not without apprehension, for I remember the descriptions of themselves which celebrated writers of autobiography—Saint Simon, for instance—have given at the commencement of their memoirs.

Far be it from me to wish to paint myself in glowing colours. That would be a pretension from which the great writers who possessed the talent necessary to describe themselves preserve me. I only hope, if possible, to describe myself as I believe myself to be.

I often examine my heart. The older I grow the stronger this tendency to self-analysis becomes. Formerly I used to like to know my fellow-creatures; now I have discovered that one should always know oneself before attempting to decipher other human enigmas.

The ancient precept of Delphes, which the King my father used to quote, comes back to my memory, but I will not give it here. I do not understand modern Greek, unlike Queen Sophie, that charming woman, who was so misguided as to learn it; she lost her throne, so they say, through trying to outwit the subtlety of Ulysses!

My predominant quality is a horror of all that is insincere, inaccurate, formal and commonplace. My taste for simplicity in thought and actions branded me long ago as a revolutionary in the eyes of my family. This was when I rebelled in Vienna against the routine and what they called the *esprit* of the Court.

My passion for sincerity has brought me unity of thought. I am a woman faithful to one vow which my heart admits freely.

I have known and loved few individuals well enough to allow myself to approach them and know them thoroughly, but when once my confidence and liking have been given and found to be justified, I have become deeply attached to those on whom they were bestowed.

Many people would have liked to have seen me deprived of happiness, but I possess at least this one jewel —faithfulness, and I have known the sweetness thereof; not only the banal and material fidelity—always more or less a passing phase as one generally understands it—but the pure and noble fidelity which accompanies a vigilant and chivalrous mind; the ideal of noble hearts, which is revolted by injustice and attracted by misfortune. Diverse fidelities, although sisters, are marvellous treasures in which one must be rich oneself to be enabled further to enrich the future with precious gifts.

Firm in upholding my rights, and true to my convictions when I believe them to be in accordance with honour and truth—which spring from a divine essence—and are not inspired by hypocritical conventions, I am afraid

of nothing, and nothing can convince me against my will.

I have inherited these traits from my father and my mother; from my mother I get the spiritual side, and from my father I get the material side of my character. It is useless, therefore, to believe that I should ever act against the dictates of my conscience.

If I am compelled to give way for a moment, I do so as one would yield at the point of the bayonet.

Wickedness and compulsion do not create equity, they only create its reservations, and redress to justice is from God alone and not from man.

This strength of resistance against evil and contempt of etiquette are, so to speak, the salient characteristics of my life.

But in spite of my decided opinions I show marked nervousness in the presence of strangers. When they are introduced to me I can hardly speak to them, even though their personality appeals to me.

My beloved compatriots in Brussels, the friends who are always present in my thoughts, used to say, " Princess Louise is proud ! " What a mistake ! On the contrary, I should have much liked to respond to the affection they offered me, and to have entered those Belgian homes that I knew to be so hospitable. Ah ! what happiness not to have been born a king's daughter ! One could then speak freely to fellow-creatures who merited sympathy; but a princess cannot do as she pleases.

With my entourage I am sometimes as open and expan-

sive as I am silent and reserved with strangers. I mistrust fresh faces, and in no circumstances do I ever indulge in gossip. I much prefer the conversation of men who know something, to that of women who know nothing.

I detest all that is unnatural in conversation; affectation is insupportable to me. Idle remarks which annoy me easily suggest some repartee or sarcastic comment such as the King knew so well how to use, which always touched to the quick the person to whom it was addressed. But the influence of the Queen's memory sometimes restrains me and keeps me silent out of Christian charity.

Immovable in the convictions of my conscience and outwardly reserved, I am, nevertheless, a woman of contradictions. When I am forced to act I invariably rush to extremes. Soul extremes always result from contrasts, just as the thunder of heaven results from the meeting of two storm clouds. In me the storm is suppressed. I surprise people more than anything else by my customary attitude of not being able to foresee the decision which carries me away.

I do not regard existence from the ordinary standpoint; I regard it from a much higher one. This is not due to any feeling of pride. I am carried away by something within me past certain barriers and certain frontiers; I live in a world of my own in which I can take refuge.

Many, many times during the implacable persecution which I have endured for so long, I have stood in front of a mirror and tried to read the soul within my

eyes. I was a prisoner; I was "mad" for reasons of State. I asked myself in cold blood, was I not really becoming mad—was I still mistress of my reason?

"Yes," replied an inner voice, "you are mistress of your reason so long as you are mistress of yourself, and you are mistress of yourself so long as you remain faithful to your ideal of honour."

I will speak of this ideal later. Honest women will understand. But my nature did not find in the conjugal abode the good, the pure and the true, which it had dreamed of, hoped for, and desired. As the years passed the atmosphere of my home changed, the growing children became less of a safeguard. Help came in a day of chaos under an aspect which the world condemns. Nothing stopped me then, and, henceforth, nothing shall separate me from my ideal. I have done away with the gilded splendour which to me is shameful. I live now with that which speaks to me in a language I can understand, something which is morally beautiful. This act of my inner self is now realized. I have not repented. I never shall.

Dramas, plots, intrigues, treason follow each other—I struggle against them without triumphing. It is the work of my outward self. I may appear to fail, but my inner self turns away disgusted from the mud.

I was not made to conquer in the fray of human conflicts in a sphere which is, perhaps, that of creatures predestined to show that the real condition of man is not here below. The society that he extols, the civilization

that he admires, are but the poor and fragile conceptions of his illusion of earthly sovereignty, and they will only bring misfortune to him if he lives for them alone.

God was always present in my thoughts even when I believed myself forgotten by man.

I have had, like every creature who has been crushed by false witness, my hours of doubt and despair. The grievance against me at the Coburg Palace and in Vienna was that I would not conform to the outward practice of religion after I had seen all its double-facedness and mock devotion. I often refused to go to the chapel and accept as fitting the outward piety which to me was sacrilege. I went to seek God and the Holy Virgin in some solitary and humble church far from the Hofburg and my palace.

I have also known the time when at the bidding of my rebellious soul I turned from heaven. Suffering, experience and meditation have led me back to the Divine Master whose love was taught me by my beloved mother. I believe I shall reach His presence by a road which resembles Calvary. It is an uphill road, but He raises me; and so rugged is it, that at every turning I forget the world a little more and I stretch out my arms towards the love and justice of God.

* * * * *

They have said that I was beautiful. I inherit from my father my upright figure, and I have also something of his features and his expression.

I inherit from my mother a certain capacity for dream-

ing, which enables me to take refuge in myself, and when a conversation does not interest me, or if anyone or anything troubles me, I instantly seek sanctuary in the secret chamber of my soul.

But my eyes betray me, and the effort I make to return to everyday life gives me the expression of a fugitive—this is a great peculiarity of mine.

The colour of my eyes is a clear brown, which reflects those of the Queen and the King, but more particularly those of the King. Like him, I am able to change my voice from softness to a certain hard brilliance. The golden ears of corn are not more golden than was once my golden hair; to-day it is silver.

I speak like the King, but somewhat slower than he did, in the two languages I chiefly employ—which are equally familiar to me—French and German.

Like him I think in French or German, but when I write, I prefer to do so in French.

So enamoured am I of simplicity and truth in relation to every condition of life, that I think a woman, wherever she may be, should always keep her position as a woman. Of course there must be degrees in everything, and the differences among men are the outcome of their education and the rules of social life.

Although I am utterly indifferent to false courtesy and hollow praise, and the methods of the crafty and the claims of intriguers, I respect merit, and when it is recognized and rewarded I esteem the honour which is accorded to it.

Let us not look for outside honours but let us respect our own personal honour. I do not forget, I have never forgotten, even in my worst hours of misfortune, what I owe to my birth, to my dear departed ones and to the ideas which were born in me.

I love Art, and, like the Queen, I have a preference for music. I also inherit her love of horses. Sport seems to me a secondary thing in comparison with the interest of horsemanship in all its varieties.

In Paris I was always to be seen in the Bois; in Vienna I was an *habituée* of the Prater. I still take great pleasure in picking out carriages that are carriages and horsemen who are horsemen; they are both rarer than one thinks.

I am a great reader and I make notes of my impressions. I read with pleasure all the newspapers worth reading, and all the reviews that make me think.

Politics never bore me, but to-day they astonish me and rend my heart; the frightful upheaval in Europe, the universal trouble, fill me with concern for the future.

Hostile to any excess of monarchical power which incites its favourites to depravity, I think, nevertheless, that democrats will find it difficult to conduct matters and govern to the betterment of general interests. The etiquette of Power, the name of President, Consul, Emperor or King signifies but one thing, and besides this the principle of authority is always regulated by the influence of Woman.

This influence, supreme in the history of the world, is only paramount in democracies when it exercises itself in

secret, and it is generally unlucky. In monarchies it is beneficial to the development of aristocracy, except in the classic case of a drunken or perverse favourite who by taking sensual possession of the prince also takes possession of his authority.

In some instances it is not wise to lead men to good fortune. Those of our epoch seem to be very far from attaining it through hatred, ignorance and confusion, which the ruin of ancient Europe can only aggravate.

With regard to books, I re-read more than I read. But I am attracted by anything new which I hear spoken about —in which, by the way, I am so often disappointed. I have read books on the war; I commiserate with the men who cut each others throats—but I wish they would cease writing on this barbarous subject.

Goethe is my favourite author; he is the friend and companion whom I love at all times. I am familiar with the great French authors, but none of them, in my opinion, attains the mental serenity of Goethe or gives me so much repose of mind.

I have a penchant for the works of Chateaubriand which dates from my youth. The character of René will always appeal to the hearts of women.

With regard to modern books. . . . But in speaking of literary men and artists it is always necessary to exclude those who are living, so I will say nothing about modern authors. I will only say that of all theatrical plays (Shakespeare, like God in Heaven, alone excepted) the French repertory, in my opinion, is the most varied and the

most interesting, and through the facilities which I have had of hearing plays in the principal European languages, I think I am able to judge. I am speaking now of the dramatic theatre. The works and the representations of the lyric theatre appear generally more remarkable, and the companies are more conscientious in Germany and Austria and even in Italy, than in France.

Outside Paris and Monte Carlo it is difficult to find, even in the most charming countries, what all unimportant German towns possess—a comfortable theatre, good music, good singers.

How strange are different temperaments: this one is more musical, that one is more learned, this one is more philosophical, that one is more imaginative; it seems as though Providence, in creating diversities in races and characters, had wished to instil into men's hearts the necessity of amalgamating their different talents, in order to be happy in this world. But Providence, whilst endowing men with genius, has neglected to make them less foolish and less wicked.

CHAPTER III

The Queen

THE Queen was the daughter of Joseph Antoine Jean, Prince Royal of Hungary and Bohemia, Archduke of Austria (the last Palatin, greatly venerated by the Hungarians), and his third wife, Marie Dorothée Guillemine Caroline, Princess of Wurtemburg.

Affianced to Prince Leopold, Duke of Brabant, heir to the throne of Belgium, Marie Henriette of Austria married him by proxy at Schönbrunn on August 10, 1853, and in person, according to the *Almanach de Gotha*, in Brussels on the 22nd of the same month.

By this marriage the Royal House of Belgium, already connected with those of France, Spain, England and Prussia, became allied to the reigning families of Austria-Hungary, Bavaria, Wurtemburg, etc.

The young queen was the daughter of a good and simple mother, herself a model of virtue. Her brothers were the Archduke Joseph, a gallant soldier who had three horses killed under him at Sadowa, and the Archduke Stephen, the idol of my childhood, who was banished from the Court of Vienna because he was too popular. He ended his days in exile at the Château of Schaumbourg in Germany.

King Leopold the First, my grandfather, having died

on November 10, 1865, King Leopold II and Queen Henriette ascended the throne.

I can still see the Queen as I saw her when I lay in her arms as a child, so long has my adoration for her survived, so long has my belief in another world remained sacred to her memory.

The Queen was of medium height and of slender build. Her beauty and grace were unrivalled. The purity of her lines and her shoulders merited the expression "royal." Her supple carriage was that of a sportswoman. Her voice was of such pure timbre that it awakened echoes in one's soul. Her eyes, a darker brown than those of the King, were not so keenly luminous, but they were far more tender; they almost spoke.

But how much less her physical perfections counted in comparison with her moral qualities. A true Christian, her idea of religion was to follow it rigorously in every detail, without being in the least narrow-minded. She had a philosophical and an assured conception of God, and the mysteries of the Infinite. This faith enlightened her doctrine and strengthened her piety.

People who cannot, or who will not, study the problem of religion, easily persuade themselves that it is absurd to subject themselves to the laws of confession and to its signs and ceremonies. The sincere Christian is the woman who is *par excellence* a wife and a mother, but to some bigots she is merely an inferior being, who has fallen into the hands of priests—but they would doubtless be very

pleased all the same to have her as the guardian angel of their own home.

Religion did not in the least deter the Queen from her obligations to the State, or from her taste for Art, or from indulging in her favourite pursuit of sport.

She received her guests, she presided over her circle, she attended fêtes with a natural charm peculiar to her, which I passionately admired from the moment when I was old enough to follow in her wake.

The Queen dressed with an inborn art which was always in harmony with her surroundings. A woman in her position has to set out to please and win the hearts of people, and she is therefore obliged more than anyone else to study her toilette. The Queen excelled in this to such perfection that she was always held up as an example by the arbiters of Parisian fashion.

At any time fashion is peculiar, or at least it seems to be; if it were not so there would be no fashion; but *la mode* is not so varied as one thinks. Considered as novelties, her innovations are nothing more or less than little discoveries and arrangements with which the serpent, if not Eve, was already familiar in the Garden of Eden.

The Queen followed *la mode* without innovating fashions—that is the affair of other queens—queens of fashion, for which they have reasons, not dictated by Reason. But the Queen adopted and perfected fashions. It was miraculous to see how she wore the fairy-like lace which is the glory and charm of Belgium. I have always remembered one of her gowns, a certain cerise-coloured

silk, the corsage draped with a fichu of Chantilly—one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen in my life.

The Queen would often adorn the gowns worn by her at her receptions with garlands of fresh flowers. She knew how to wear them, and what a delight it was to my sisters and myself when we were told to go into the conservatories and prepare the garlands of roses, dahlias, or asters which our beloved sovereign was going to wear.

A perfect musician, the Queen was equally brilliant in her execution of a *Czarda*, an Italian melody or an air from an Opera, which she interpreted in a soprano voice, the possession of which many a professional singer would have envied her.

One of her great pleasures was to sing duets with Faure, the illustrious baritone, a well-bred artist who never presumed on his position. The Queen and Faure were wonderful in the famous duets from *Hamlet* and *Rigoletto*. . . . I think of her singing even now with emotion. But all this belongs to the past; it is far away.

The Queen received the best artistic society on the same footing as the best Belgian society at her private receptions. She closely followed all the doings at the Théâtre de la Monnaie and the Théâtre du Parc. She interested herself in deserving talent. She was not ignorant of the anxieties and difficulties of a career of which four hours, so to speak, are lived in the realms of illusion, and the remaining twenty face to face with reality. She frequently showed her solicitude for artists in the most delicate and opportune manner. The memory of her

kindness lives in many hearts. In the theatrical world gratitude is less rare than elsewhere. One can never speak too highly of the good that exists in the souls of these people, who appear so frivolous and easy-going on the surface. Corneille always had a good word for them.

The Queen loved horses with the appreciation of a born horsewoman; she liked to drive high-spirited animals, and I have inherited her taste. She knew how to control the wild Hungarian horses which were only safe with her. Refreshed with champagne, or bread dipped in red wine, they flew like the wind; one might have said that she guided them by a thread, but in reality she made them obedient to the sound of her voice.

She groomed her horses herself and taught them wonderful circus tricks. I have seen one of them ascend the grand staircase of Laeken, enter the Queen's room and come down again as though nothing had happened. What amused her most was to drive two or four different animals at once who had never been harnessed, and who were so high-spirited that no one dared to drive them. By dint of patience and the magnetic charm of her voice the most restive animal eventually became docile.

Her life was so ordered that she found time for everything—maternal cares were first and foremost with her; she looked upon these as sweet duties, of which I was her first burden.

I was a year old when my brother Leopold was born, who, alas! only lived a few years. I was six years old when my sister Stéphanie was born, and when Clémen-

tine came into the world I was already twelve years old. I was therefore the eldest bird in the Queen's nest—the big sister who was taught to assist her mother equally well on the steps of the throne as in a cottage. It was I who was expected to set a good example to the brothers and sisters who might come after me; it was I who was expected to benefit the most from maternal teachings. I certainly had the priority, but I was not the favourite, though owing to my age I was, in some ways, the most privileged.

Our mother brought us up after the English fashion; our rooms were more like those in a convent than the rooms of the princesses one reads about in the novels of M. Bourget.

When I was no longer under the daily and nightly supervision of a governess or nurse, I was expected to look after myself, and when I got out of bed in the morning I had to fetch the jug of cold water from outside the door which was intended (in all seasons) for my ablutions, for neither in the Palace at Brussels nor at the Château of Laeken had the "last word" in comfort attained perfection.

The Queen taught me from my earliest youth how to manage servants; I learned from her very early in life that it was possible to be on a throne one day and the next to find one's self in the streets. How many of my relations or friends can contradict this to-day? But at that time my mother's cold reasoning would have disgusted the Courts and the chancellors.

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QUEEN MARIE HENRIETTE OF BELGIUM

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My mother made me think deeply. Thought was my first revelation of a real existence. I began to look further than the throne and a title for the means of moral and intellectual superiority, I became a definite personality; I wished to form my own ideas so that in after life I could always be myself.

The Queen helped to mould my character by abundant reading, chiefly in French and English—principally memoirs. I was never, or very rarely, allowed to read a novel. The Queen read deliciously, giving the smallest phrase its full value; the manner in which she read aloud was not only that of a woman who knew *how* to read, but it also displayed a penetrating intelligence—in fact, it was more like speaking than reading, and it seemed to come from a heart which understood everything.

The Queen was gay and entrancingly charming with her intimate friends. She was always like this, in her excursions in the country, at croquet parties, at her own receptions, and in her box at the theatre. Her good humour was in accordance with the promptings of a generous and expansive nature.

On my birthday, August 25, 1894, which I celebrated with her at Spa, she wished to mark the auspicious occasion by improvising a small dance after *déjeuner*, which she had specially ordered to be served, not in her villa, but in a room reserved for her in an hotel, thus making *déjeuner* a more agreeable and homely affair. There were present myself and my sisters, Stéphanie's daughter, and my own, and all of us wore our smartest gowns.

The Queen insisted on Clémentine, who was an accomplished musician, playing the piano, and having sent for Gerard, her *maître d'hôtel*, who had accompanied us to supervise the service (he was one of those servants who believed in their duty towards their employers, and who knew the meaning of the name of servant), the Queen said to him:

"Gerard, in honour of the princess's birthday you are going to waltz with us."

"Oh, your Majesty!"

"Yes, yes, you are going to waltz once with me, and once with the princess."

"Oh, your Majesty!"

"What? Do you not know how to waltz?"

"Yes, your Majesty, a little."

"*Eh bien*, Gerard, waltz! Now, Clémentine, play a waltz."

The faithful Gerard could but obey, blushing, and shy and hardly daring to glance at his royal partner. The Queen then said laughingly:

"Don't be afraid, Gerard, I am not a sylphide."

Gerard then waltzed with my mother and also with me, and he waltzed well!

The next day he was once more the model servant—such as are loved and esteemed by their masters, whom they love and esteem in return, if those they serve only know how to merit their devotion.

The Queen took no part in politics except to discharge her duties as a sovereign. On a man like the King,

feminine influence could not be exercised by a wife and mother.

It was impossible for the Queen to find in her husband the perfect union of thought, the intimacy of action and the entire confidence which, in no matter what household, are the only possible conditions for happiness, and the first deception which she experienced was followed by others which became more and more cruel.

The trial which caused the Queen to be inconsolable and which had such painful consequences, was the death of her son Leopold.

My mother could never be comforted for the loss of the heir to the Throne, this child of so much promise, who had been given and retaken by Heaven. This was the sorrow of her life. She even alluded to it in her admirable will.

From the day of his death, her health, always so robust, gradually changed little by little. Her soul began to break away from earthly things and lose itself more and more in prayer and contemplation. She lived only in the ardent hope of meeting her son in heaven.

The Queen was always a saint—and she soon became a martyr. She suffered immensely through the aloof greatness of the King, who existed solely for his Royal duties, although he would occasionally suddenly indulge in some unbridled pleasure after his arduous work. His was a nature of extremes which a tender soul could not understand, and hence arose misunderstandings and their tragic consequences. Against such a fate, which

could only become more and more unhappy, there was nothing to be done. Earthly life is doomed to know implacable disillusions.

But however much the Queen suffered she never diminished her Heaven-inspired kindness. She would sometimes give way to her sorrow and allow the cries of her wounded soul to be heard! She would even attempt to defend herself by some action of which the public was cognizant but which it failed to understand. But she always returned to the feet of Christ the Consoler.

It is there that I shall find her, and there I shall offer my veneration and love to this sublime mother who instilled in me the passion to fulfil my duties, as I define them.

My idea of duty, face to face with myself, is, firstly, a rightful and complete liberty of action; that is to say, freedom of body and soul; from this comes the seeking after God here below and the ascension to Him through human errors and human weaknesses.

Oh! well-beloved mother, I have passed through life without at all understanding the mysteries which surround us, but, following your simple faith, I have believed, *I now* believe, in the presence of a Creator.

CHAPTER IV

The King

MY father was not only a great king—he was a great man.

A king may achieve greatness through possessing the art of surrounding himself with the right entourage, and thus taking advantage of the importance which it is then so easy for him to gain. He must be superior, at least at heart, to have a taste for superiority.

When he came into power Leopold II did not aim at gathering round him those wonderful intellects who would have inspired him to greatness. He had not the same chances as Louis XIV, neither had he those men whom his own example later developed. Belgium was still an adolescent State, the government of which required very careful and exclusive handling. She had sprung into being from twin countries, widely different in character, but united by the same laws. Her national policy is like a web whose mission it is to hold them together, but such a form of Constitution is not without its inconveniences.

For a long time the King's secret conviction was, that in order to be able to endure and strengthen herself, Belgium had urgent need of some great scheme which would produce in her an amalgamation of effort and intelligence, and allow her to take one of the highest places among the nations of the world.

He had carefully studied the map of the world, and his observations resulted in the unheard-of project of endowing his little kingdom with immense colonial possessions. He had at the time neither the money nor the army; he only had the idea, but the idea obsessed him and he lived for it alone.

The man whom I recall to my mind in thinking of the King is one whose silence always frightened me when I was a child. Here is an instance of his taciturn character.

The Queen is seated, holding in her hand a book which she is no longer reading. She is folding me close to her heart, whilst her eyes follow the King. The doors of the drawing-room leading to the other rooms are open, and the Sovereign paces backwards and forwards, his hands behind his back, almost like an automaton, without glancing at us and without breaking his interminable train of thought. Silence lies over the palace; nobody dares enter, for the King has forbidden access to the Royal apartments. The Queen and I are involuntary prisoners of this prisoner of his own thoughts.

The King was a fine and strong figure. His imposing personality and his characteristic physiognomy are familiar even to the new generation, who have only seen the popular pictures of him; but photographs never did justice to his expression of sceptical shrewdness. His eyes, as I have already said, were light brown; at the least opposition they assumed a fixed expression, and when it rested on my sisters and myself when we were in fault, the King's glance terrified us more than any reproaches or punishment.

The King's voice was deep and somewhat muffled in *timbre*, sometimes it grew nasal; when he was angry it became, like his eyes, as hard as a stone, but if he wished to please it became soft and emotional. People still speak of the manner in which he delivered his speech from the Throne after the death of Leopold I, and his touching opening words: "Gentlemen, Belgium, like myself, has lost a father."

When he was in a happy mood he became animated, although his humour, when he was pleased to show it, was always bitter and satirical—and he possessed it in abundance. I have never forgotten certain of his opinions touching his Ministers and contemporaries. Some of those who are still living would be very flattered to know them. Others would not!

The King paid little attention to me or my sisters; his fatherly caresses were rare and brief. We were always awed in his presence; he was ever to us more the King than the father.

With regard to his attitude towards the Queen, as far back as I can remember I always see him as the same self-centred and taciturn man in his relations with her.

He was constantly away from home, so we little ones were rarely with both our parents. I alone, on account of my age and the advantage which it gave me over my sisters, enjoyed a little family life with my father and my mother before the differences between them arose. But I cannot recall a single act of kindness or tenderness on his

part towards my mother that I especially noticed in my youth.

I only know that at a certain epoch, when I was about eleven years old, the King, who like my mother adored flowers, never missed bringing her some every week which he had gathered himself in the Royal gardens. He would arrive in my mother's apartment laden with his fragrant harvest and would say to her abruptly, "Here you are, my good wife."

Stéphanie and I would at once begin to refill the vases —I especially, for I had been taught by the Queen to love and arrange flowers, those discreet companions of our thoughts, which bring into the home perfume, colour, caresses and rest, and which are verily the quintessence of earth and heaven!

One day at Laeken my father offered me a gardenia. I was simply stupefied. I was then about thirteen. I hoped for a long time for a repetition of this paternal graciousness, but in vain!

This prince of genius, whose political conceptions and manner of conducting negotiations useful to Belgium won the admiration, if not of those to whom they were advantageous, of at least the high intelligences of other countries, was singularly thorough in small things. He clung to his ideas and his personal concerns in a most obstinate manner. I have seen him look into the management of the gardens at Laeken with the greatest attention to every detail.

Large, juicy peaches grew on the walls of the gardens, and the King was very proud of them. I had a passion

for peaches, and one day I dared eat one which was hidden away among the leaves. And that year peaches were plentiful. But the following day the King discovered the theft—what a dramatic moment! At once suspected, I confessed my crime and I was promptly punished. I did not realize that the King counted his peaches!

This great realist had a realistic mind, and materialism carried him on to idealism. I will not allow myself for a moment to suppose that he did not believe in God, but certainly he had a different conception of the Creator from that of the Queen. She suffered greatly through this attitude of her husband, but he persisted in his way of thinking.

On Sundays he used to attend Mass; he considered it was an example which he owed to the Court and the people. Sometimes he escorted the Queen to Divine Service, taking with him "Squib," a tiny terrier of which the Queen was very fond and which the King always spoke of as one refers to a person. He called it "The Squib."

It was a sight to see the big man holding the tiny dog under his arm—the little animal too terrified to move. Thus, one supporting the other, they both heard Mass seated beside the Queen, who assuredly did not think this a very religious procedure. When Mass was over, the King, still carrying Squib, would cross the reception rooms until he reached the dining-room, when he would gravely deposit the little dog on the Queen's knee.

With regard to the King's policy, I only knew and understood that related to the Congo. I knew the

alternate hopes and fears which passed through the mind of the author of this gigantic enterprise. It was the one topic of conversation around me, and it was always mentioned with bated breath; but the things which are spoken of in this way are, I think, those one hears of most.

I know that the Royal fortune and that of my aunt the Empress Charlotte, which was administered by the King, were employed at one time, not without some risk, in the acquisition and organization of the possessions that the Great Powers afterwards disputèd with Belgium. Those were anxious days for the King. He manœuvred cleverly between the Powers. History knows the value of his work; she realizes what a profound politician he was. Official Belgium does not remember, but the people have never forgotten. I have confidence in the soul of Belgium, the Belgium who has shown her greatness in the years 1914-1918. King Leopold II will one day receive the recognition he merits in the country which he enriched, and which he always wished to fortify against the dangers of war.

The private failings of the man only harmed himself and his family; his people never suffered by reason of them. They have even benefited by the immense wealth which it pleased the King to assign to his country, regardless of the justice of reserving that portion which belonged to his daughters, who were excluded by him from the Belgian family.

Here we touch on a side of the King's character which

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Photo: Numa Blanc

KING LEOPOLD II OF BELGIUM

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is looked upon by psychologists as unnatural, and is similar to the legislation of which the Belgian Government availed itself in similar circumstances, a legislation contrary to the moral laws of justice and equity.

Belgium's excuse—if there can be an excuse for this illegality—was that the King himself had exceeded his rights.

I have read, over the signature of a journalist, that even before his marriage the King declared that he would never accept any benefit from the Royal purse, and that his income, from whatever source it was derived, should not accrue for the benefit of his descendants.

This is an astounding story and is a pure invention. A king is a man like other men; the value of his position rests upon his qualifications. The King could have either ruined or enriched himself. He was a genius, and for this reason his daughters were able to be—and indeed were—deprived of a fortune which was partly theirs by right, and which was used for the development of a commercial enterprise by the colossal audacity of their father!

But why should the King have wished to disinherit his daughters and deprive them of his immense accumulation of wealth? The reason must be definitely stated.

The King had long wished that our fortunes (those of my sisters and myself) should be reduced to the minimum of what he considered convenient to assign to us, that is to say, much less than our needs required, because, after the death of our brother Leopold, he only saw in us impedi-

ments to his own ambition and he was tortured by the fact that he had no male descendant.

I alone noticed, during the years that followed the death of his son, that the King on various occasions behaved in a different manner towards the Queen; he was more amiable and was more frequently in her company. Having now become a woman I can understand the real reason for this!

Clémentine came into the world; her birth was preceded by many vain hopes, but when the longed-for child arrived it was once more a girl!

The King was furious and thenceforth refused to have anything to do with his admirable wife to whom God had refused a son. What a mystery of human tribulation!

As for the daughters born of the Royal union, they were merely accepted and tolerated, but the King's heart never softened towards them. At the same time we were not altogether excluded from his thoughts. The feelings of our father, so far as we were concerned, varied according to circumstances, and, notably in my own case, according to the various calumnies and intrigues. My sister Stéphanie also suffered in this way.

Both of us were married at an early age and, living as we did at a distance, we were deprived of the opportunity of constantly seeing the King, so naturally we could not pretend to be the subject of his constant remembrance. We therefore ran the risk of being easily maligned by the unscrupulous courtesans who had influence with the King and were in the pay of our enemies.

Clémentine was in a far better position. She received all the tenderness the King was inclined to bestow on the only one of his children who remained with him, one who showered on him a daughter's affection and who also upheld the traditions of the Royal House, a duty which, in the absence of the Queen, the daughter of such a mother was alone able to fulfil.

CHAPTER V

My Country and the Days of my Youth

IT is more than forty-five years that, since my marriage, Fate has exiled me from my native country. I have never revisited Belgium, except in passing through it, and then often under very painful circumstances.

Well! I will close my eyes and return in imagination to the Château of Laeken, and to a certain pathway in the park; I will go, in like manner, to one particular footpath in the forest of Soignies; there are trees, stones and roofs there, which seem to me to be those which I once knew.

An oak tree was planted at Laeken to commemorate the birth of my brother and the birth of each of my sisters and myself. I had not seen these trees thus dedicated to us for a long time, until I happened to be in Belgium for a few days after the King's death. Accompanied by that old friend of my childhood, my brother's tutor, General Donny, I made an excursion to Laeken, and I saw once more, with what bitter-sweet memories, the little garden formerly tended by my brother and myself, which had been piously preserved in its original state. Was this a mute evidence of the King's remembrance, or the fidelity of some old servants? In my

grief I did not question to whom the little garden owed its preservation. My tears alone spoke.

When I stood before our " birthday " oak trees I only saw three !

I was told that by some extraordinary coincidence the one which marked the birth of my brother had died, like him, when it was quite young. Of the others, mine was strong and vigorous; Stéphanie's had had the misfortune to grow a little crooked, but the one belonging to Clémentine was quite normal. I venture to say that the three oak trees are emblems of our destiny so far as our inner lives are concerned, which have been ignored and misunderstood by men, but which like Nature remain confident in God. These three oak trees, and the fourth which is now dead, have always troubled me since the day when I beheld them again.

Whatever they may be now I envy them ! They have grown, they have lived, they still flourish on the soil sacred to my lost ones, except one, whose absence is so expressive. I should love to see them again and to live, if not near them, at least under the shadow of other oak trees growing in my beloved country.

Would that I could end my days there, and once more find my adored mother and my vivid youth in the forests, the countryside, or the villages through which we passed so often together. She it was who taught me the secrets of Nature, and it was thus that the life of Nature and the life of Belgium, the wonders of the universe, and the life of society were revealed to me. The Queen loved

and taught me to love our heroic country, whose defence of her liberty in past ages constitutes one of the most touching episodes in history.

And I have inherited an ardent wish that my country should never become enslaved.

I know that the good people of Belgium have reproached me, as if it had been my fault, for deserting our country. Those who knew me in my youth have believed that I was transplanted to a strange and brilliant world where I forgot my native land. Then the dramas and scandals into which I was dragged on the hurdle of misunderstanding and calumny, have for some transformed me into a sinner, for whom it was not enough punishment to forbid her to see her dying mother by keeping her as a sane prisoner in a madhouse. Such a woman deserved to be wiped off the face of the earth!

Ah, poor miserable humanity, so full of evil yourself that you see nothing but evil in others, what was my crime?

I would not, I could not live under the conjugal roof. I endured my life, sacrificed myself, as long as I could, because I knew that I owed a duty towards my children, but after they grew up the horror of my life increased every day. My crime has consisted in listening to a unique man, the ideal knight who kept me from committing errors which I resolved to forget, and to do as many others have done.

In my palace, or elsewhere, I could have been the heroine of discreet and multiple adventures. This be-

haviour would have conformed to the code of high propriety, and God knows that opportunities abounded. But I was not a hypocrite and very soon I found myself up against hypocrites—innumerable legions of them. I was also the recipient of their irritating and deceitful confidences.

Thus slander did its detestable work. An implacable persecution, masking itself behind the simulated indignation of a false morality, began to assail me.

To me one of the most cruel acts was the violent attack made by my detractors on the King and Queen, and on public opinion in Belgium.

Could such a thing be possible? I found myself an exile from my country, imprisoned and branded as mad, for everyone was determined that I should become so.

It is to you, my mother, martyr and saint, and to some sublime moral strength that I owe my resistance. You armed me for the struggle by never letting me forget the essential duties of life which you had taught me. I have remained faithful to them. But I have suffered horribly since the day when even you could not understand my rebellion. I was suppressed by the world. Cleverly exploited, all appearances were against me. My enemies told you: "She is lost; she is mad; the doctors have said so."

What doctors, *mon Dieu?* The truth about these doctors came out afterwards.

Ah! some people envy princesses. They should rather pity them. I know of one for whom there has

been no justice in this world. Ordinary rights were denied her. The law of the world was not a law for her, except when it could be used against her.

Yes, a victim of an abominable plot of such surpassing cruelty that reason can scarcely conceive possible; I was not allowed to return to my beloved Belgium at the moment when I learnt, in spite of my persecutors, that my mother was dying at Spa; I could not receive her last blessing, I was not even allowed to follow her coffin . . . to the tomb!

If I did not become mad in my asylum it was because I was not meant to do so; I could not become mad. But I still tremble when I think of it.

Later, when the King was dying, I recovered my liberty, and my freedom was brought about by my friend —a friend without equal, who, having on one occasion saved me from myself, now saved me from prison and madness, after having nearly succumbed himself beneath the blows of hate and persecution.

But my freedom constituted a new crime; my fidelity to an incarnate ideal in a whole-hearted devotion constituted an additional sin.

When I attended my father's funeral I was kept under constant observation. I was restricted to a certain area of my native country. The eldest daughter of the great King whom Belgium had just lost was received with polite formality by a police official in Court attire!

Ah, no! I incriminate no one—not even the servants whose civility I had once known. I am aware how tempt-

ing and profitable it is to mislead princes, and what power exists in wicked advice when it is given with an air of devotion. I am only explaining how it came about that I did not remain in my much-loved country.

At last the frightful war broke out, following the debates regarding the King's inheritance, and I was at once even more definitely suppressed by the Belgian nation because, to my other abominations, I had added the unpardonable sin of believing that justice existed in Belgium.

I was a prisoner in Munich, where I could do nothing. I was surprised in Bavaria by hostilities and treated like a Belgian princess—that is to say, very badly, as will be seen later.

In Brussels I became an enemy princess, and from the date of the Armistice I was proclaimed a foreigner in my native country in the interests of which I had been sacrificed at the age of seventeen, and I also saw myself deprived of the inheritance which would have become mine at the death of my aunt, the Empress Charlotte of Mexico.

But it is a matter of history that my marriage with the Prince of Coburg was annulled in 1907 by the decision of the special tribunal of Gotha, judging according to the "Rights of Princes," and that this annulment was transmitted to the Court of Vienna. The divorce was ratified by all the minute forms of the law of Courts and the ancient statutes of Austria. The King officially gave me back my title of Princess of Belgium.

That meant nothing; in Brussels no notice was taken of it.

It is a fact that the law of Hungary does not recognize the " Rights of Princes " and the procedure of Gotha; in consequence of the possessions of the Coburg family in Hungary I am still a Princess of Coburg.

I lose myself in this web in which I have been entangled, but common sense tells me that the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and the separation of Austria from Hungary has put an end to the " mixed state " and the position of " mixed subject " which was that of the Prince of Coburg.

Through his ancestors, this " Austrian " Prince, Duke Philip of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, is of Franco-German and not of Hungarian origin. The princely union cancelled, the civil union dissolved, I feel I have been delivered, and that I have regained my Belgian nationality, thanks to the good will of the King himself.

They have wished to ignore this at Brussels. They have branded me as a Hungarian because the Prince of Coburg has entailed estates in Hungary. Could they not just as well have proclaimed me a Turk or a Chinese had he possessed estates in Turkey or China?

I question this; I make no reproaches whatever, especially against the principle of superior authority, for the good reason that this happened in a state whose king and queen had retreated before the invader in order to defend their country (one knows with what courage and self-denial) from the extreme frontier left them by a conquering enemy.

They returned in triumph flushed with the joy of victory. They had only time to deal with general and momentous questions. I should like to think that the attitude adopted towards myself has been merely the outcome of a destiny which wills that I should become a stranger in my own country.

I wept over this country, so dear to my heart, in 1914. I believe that her errors towards me have added to her misfortunes. I know that the judgment of Brussels in denying me my share of my father's property aroused bitter indignation in Berlin. My son-in-law, the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, brother-in-law of the Emperor William II, relied on succeeding to the inheritance of his wife's grandfather. I can only say that the anger of the German Sovereign against the resistance of Belgium was increased by the remembrance of the deception of one of his relations, on whom he was rather severe, and this may have decided him to crush the little nation which dared oppose the violation of its neutrality.

But this did not help to recall the irritable William II back to reason and humanity, because this miserable man, whom I have known since my childhood, was absolutely convinced of his rôle as the appointed scourge of God and the invincible redresser of Justice on the field of battle.

* * * * *

Let us for a moment forget these miseries and sufferings and talk of the time when I was happy in my happy country—the days when I went for excursions with the Queen and " discovered " my parents' kingdom.

What joy when I could drive like my mother! I was then barely fourteen and I was her pupil. We frequently went for excursions through our dear Belgium from early morning till late in the evening. Two or three of the Royal carriages followed. The first was driven by the Queen, the second by myself, and the third by an officer, one of the ladies-in-waiting, or, later, by my sister Clémentine. Doctor Wiemmer, a compatriot and a devoted friend of the Queen who accompanied her to the Belgian Court, often went with us, also good General Donny and General Van den Smissin, and certain maids-of-honour and other trusted members of our entourage. We halted as fancy dictated. The forest of Soignies, the environs of Spa, and the Ardennes have many a time witnessed the sight of the Queen sitting on the grass in some delightful glade, munching one of the famous *pistolets* for which Brussels is famous, and which came out of the Royal bakeries (what delicious cakes were made there! I can taste them even yet). How beautiful Belgium was then, and what pure air refreshed us. How eagerly I awaited the future.

On these long excursions the Queen carried a map and made out the itinerary herself with the skill of a staff officer; she also taught me and my sisters how to take our bearings.

At this time the automobile had not yet ravaged the world. I have come across this stupefying remark of a Frenchman, "Speed is the aristocracy of movement." One might as well say, "Thoughtlessness is the aristocracy of thought." The automobile is doubtless of occasional

individual benefit, but I look upon it as a general scourge. Side by side with the satisfaction which it procures, it upsets existence by precipitating it.

At the time when horse-drawn vehicles were in constant use, we had different impressions of a day's excursion than those which we have after the end of three weeks' feverish motoring—when we halt at various palaces, drive between interminable rows of poplars, interspersed with fleeting visions of fields, houses and poultry-yards, and when we are tortured by the dread of being made untidy by the wind and splashed by the mud.

It is nearly half a century since the horse was the ornament and comfort of the best European society. The example of the Queen of Belgium then counted for something.

In France, the Orleans family—which is related to ours—and the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres led the fashion not only in Cannes, but in Normandy and in the delicious region of Chantilly. The duchess always rode in an admirable riding habit. I well remember her black eyes, her pure features and her dazzling personality which were a mixture of natural charm and inborn distinction.

The Prince de Joinville, so artistic, so witty, was endowed with the most exquisite and gallant spirit. He paid me marked attention, as did his brother the Duc de Montpensier. We were a very gay trio, and the graver members of the family were wont to cast severe glances in our direction.

The mention of the Orleans family recalls to me the

most indulgent, the greatest nobleman of all—the Duc d'Aumale, a faithful friend of Belgium and often our host. Oh! what a loyal and noble character the French Republic refused to recognize in him. His revenge was to overwhelm his ungrateful country with kindness. I have lived under his roof and I think of him with the greatest tenderness. I still see myself in a room on the ground floor overlooking the moat at Chantilly, where this princely host surrounded himself with everything that counted for anything in France, and where he held wonderful receptions, frequently numbering among his guests the magnificent-looking Prince de Condé, whom he honoured and had almost brought back to life.

The Queen and the Duc d'Aumale were greatly attached to one another. When the bitterness of a difficult situation rendered her life first difficult, and then impossible, owing to the King's forgetfulness of what was due from the man to the prince, the Duc d'Aumale was one of those invaluable friends whose delicate understanding and faithful thoughts consoled her helplessness.

Although devoted to the Duc d'Aumale, I also knew the Comtesse de Paris intimately, with whom I have stayed at the Château d'Eu. She was an eccentric woman, rather odd-looking in appearance, but she possessed a joyous and lively disposition.

Another lady of the Orleans family who became familiar to me in early life was the Princess Clémentine of respected memory, a daughter of King Louis Philippe, and the wife of Prince Auguste of Coburg. I became her

daughter-in-law by my marriage with her eldest son, and my ardent hope was that she would be a second mother to me. It did not occur to either of us that her age and my youth could not agree.

Gratitude also recalls to my mind my near relations the Comte and Comtesse de Flandre, and their many kindnesses which I have not forgotten. Their noble lives have known the awful sadness of the destruction of a tenderly nurtured future. But God has granted them reserves of hope and affection.

I was nearly forgetting one of the chief recollections of my earliest childhood—Queen Marie Amélie, the widow of King Louis Philippe.

This Royal lady, who bore her loss and her exile with so much dignity, was my great-grandmother and my godmother. She lived in retirement at Claremont, near Esher.

When the Queen received the news of my birth her first question was: "Has she small ears?" She expressed the wish for me to be named Louise Marie, in memory of her daughter, my venerated grandmother, the first Queen of the Belgians.

I can still picture my sweet old relation, with her white curls showing underneath a wide-brimmed lace cap. I can again see the early breakfast placed at the side of the deep arm-chair, and I remember the "pain à la Grecque" which she gave me when I had been good.

Then the pony was brought round, and my cousin Blanche de Nemours and myself were installed in the

double panniers, and taken for our daily ride in the shady avenues of the great park.

The Queen had as reader Miss Müser, a German, who was the faithful friend and constant companion of her old age. I was very young at this time, certainly not more than four, but I have religiously treasured in my remembrance the face, the voice, and the tenderness of my great-grandmother, Marie Amélie, Queen of France.

As everyone knows, my two sisters, whom I always remember in those happy times when we still ignored what is called life, are both married. Stéphanie, like myself, married very early, and Clémentine much later in life.

Stéphanie as a child, a young girl and a young woman was the more beautiful. Clémentine, who was also beautiful, possessed the most charm. Destiny has smiled upon her. Her life with the King gave her the insight and guidance which we never enjoyed. Every life has its favours and its chances in the human lottery.

Clémentine married Prince Victor Napoleon and the widely varied possibilities attached to such a name.

Stéphanie's marriage seemed brilliant, not with eventualities but with certainties. I refer to her first husband, for she married twice. The first time she had the good luck to marry an intelligent, handsome and chivalrous man, who was perhaps the most remarkable personality of his time. He shared with her the crown of Charles-Quint and the thrones of Austria-Hungary . . . crown and thrones have disappeared, as though banished by the wand of some infernal magician, and my sister remains known to

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THE COUNTESS LONYAY

(Princess Stéphanie of Belgium)

(Her first husband was the Archduke Rudolph of Austria)

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history as the widow of the Archduke Rudolph. She was only twenty-five years of age when he died.

I have said nothing about the *mise en scène* in the midst of which the various personages moved who appealed to my intelligence and to my heart at an age when my heart and mind were alike expanding. There is nothing to tell but what is already well known.

The most interesting place of all others to me in my childhood was the Château of Laeken. I have no agreeable memories of the Palace at Brussels, although I have not forgotten the gallery and the reception rooms, where the many beautiful pictures always interested me, above all that of Charles I, by Van Dyck, dressed in black, in whose pale and noble face I seemed to read the melancholy fate which overshadows some doomed monarchs.

I have seen many princely and many royal abodes. They all resemble museums, and they are equally fatiguing. Better to have a cottage and a small Teniers than own ten *salons* and five hundred linen tablecloths which belong to everybody.

I was happy at Laeken because work became less absorbing. We had more liberty, more space. I never hesitated to run or jump in the gardens and the park from the earliest age, and I always took the lead instead of my brother, who seemed to be the girl. I was strong, lively and full of devilment.

I was eager and willing to learn. My habit of asking questions gave me the name of " Madame Pourquoi." I always loved truth and logic. My instinctive passion for

truth made me attack my governess tooth and nail one day because she wished to punish me undeservedly. I was in such a state of mind that Dr. Wiemmer, who was called in, decided to get to the bottom of the cause of my fury. He concluded that I was right in fact, if not in action, and he saw that my character was one that could only be led by kindness, frankness and justice. The governess was sent away.

The Queen recalled this incident and the doctor's words many times.

This medical man who was so devoted to my family, and who disappeared all too soon, once saved my sister Stéphanie's life when she was stricken with typhoid, and when she was better the King and Queen took us to Biarritz—a change of air being necessary for our convalescent. My sister and I shared the same room facing the sea at the Villa Eugénie. I was thirteen years old, Stéphanie was seven. I was entrusted with the care of her, and to see that she did not catch cold. One night a tempestuous wind arose which, incidentally, produced a terrible waterspout. Waking up, I rushed to the window, which was open, in my nightgown. The system of closing the window would not act, or perhaps I was clumsy; anyhow, I could not manage to shut the window. The wind now rose to such fury that every moment I was blown back into the room. I began to tremble as I feared for Stéphanie. But I still continued to struggle against the force of the storm. How long this lasted I do not know. I only remember that they found me frozen,

soaked and shivering, and that I was put into a warm bed.

My eyes closed. I heard Dr. Wiemmer say to the Queen: "What a child! Any other would have called out or rung the bell! She did not wish for help to protect her sister, and the storm did not frighten her. She only listened to the voice of duty, and she did not flinch."

Alas! each of us is made according to his or her destiny.

The first blow which made me realize the cruel severity of Fate was the death of my brother Leopold. I had for him the feelings of a devoted and "motherly" sister.

He was my property, my chattel, my child. We grew up together. I had considerable authority over him as I was twelve months older than he was, and he always obeyed me.

Leopold, Duke of Brabant and Comte de Hainaut, loved to play with dolls. I much preferred playing with him. Nevertheless my uncle, the Archduke Etienne, my mother's brother, one of the best and most distinguished men that the earth has produced, gave us two Hungarian dolls. These were works of art of their kind. Mine was christened "Figaro," a souvenir of Beaumarchais, the enemy of Courts, who thus named it; why, and wherefore, I cannot say. My brother's doll received the much more modest and romantic name of "Irma."

There came a time when Figaro and Irma enlivened

the Château of Laeken. They even made the King laugh. I organized performances with Leopold, Irma and Figaro which would have made Bartholo jealous.

My brother and I were happy and light-hearted—as happy as it is possible to be at our age. Then came death, which lacerated my whole being, and the passing of my beloved brother in his ninth year. I remember then that I dared curse God and disown Him. . . .

Leopold, handsome, sweet, sincere, tender and intelligent, embodied for me, after our mother, all that was most precious in the world—I could no more conceive existence without him than the day without light. But he could not stay . . . and I still weep for him, although it is more than fifty years since he left me.

If he had lived how different things would have been!

Our house, thus struck down in the male descent of its eldest branch, never recovered from this misfortune. Belgium will remember in the great works accomplished by her, that my grandfather and my father made her what she is.

She will not forget that angel on earth, my grandmother, the immortal Queen Louise. Many, many tears were shed at her death, and have still left their traces in Belgium.

Of my grandfather, I will repeat what M. Delehaye, President of the Chamber of Representatives, said in his address to the King during the magnificent fêtes of July 21-23, 1856, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of his succession to the throne.

"On July 21, 1831, confidence and joy burst forth at your Coronation, and Sire, although you were then alone on your throne with your eminent qualities and the prospect of splendid political alliances, you are not alone to-day. You present yourself to the country supported by your two sons and the remembrance of the Queen beloved and regretted as a mother, you are surrounded by the Royal family, by illustrious alliances, by confidence and sympathy, you are supported by foreign Governments, your fame has grown greater, and you possess the love of Belgium which has grown still greater than any fame. Sire, we can have confidence in the future. . . ."

Cannot I, must I not, also, have faith in the future?

I appeal to my illustrious ancestors; I appeal to the memory of the Queen; I appeal to the memory of the King, by whom, alas! I was too often denied and betrayed. I appeal to that world where everything is illuminated for the soul liberated from earth, which will alone see clearly for me.

CHAPTER VI

My Marriage and the Austrian Court—the Day after my Marriage

I WAS barely fifteen when it was first decided that I was to be married. On March 25, 1874, I was officially betrothed to Prince Philip of Saxe-Coburg; on February 18 I entered my sixteenth year.

My fiancé certainly showed perseverance. He had already made two proposals for me. His first was repeated after an interval of two years. The King replied to it by advising him to travel. The prince then made a tour round the world; this completed he renewed his request. Again he was asked to wait.

To marry me had become a fixed idea with Philip of Coburg. What sort of love inspired him? Was he attracted by the elusive charm of my virginal youth, or did the definite knowledge of the King's position and the belief in the future of his enterprises fan the flame in the heart of a man who was absolutely engrossed with material things?

The engagement being arranged, the two families interested (mine especially), the Queen on the one hand, and the Princess Clémentine on the other, decided that my marriage was not to be celebrated until twelve months later. I was so young!

My fiancé was fourteen years older than I. Fourteen

years' difference is not perhaps of much account between a young woman of twenty-five and a man of thirty-nine; it is a great deal, however, between an innocent girl of seventeen and a lover of thirty-one.

I had only occasional glimpses of my fiancé during his rapid visits to Brussels. Our conversations were of no account; they were merely such as a man of his age would hold with a girl of mine. But I thought I knew him well. We were cousins. This constituted the first difficulty, as the sanction of the Church of Rome was necessary to the marriage. It was asked for and obtained. This is the custom in such cases.

My fiancé left me to complete the studies necessary for my successful début in a strange world. And what a world! The most courtly of Courts in the universe. A Court haunted by the shades of Charles V and Maria Theresa! A Court in which Spanish etiquette was allied to German discipline. An emperor whose greatness had been increased rather than diminished by his military reverses, so well did he bear his misfortunes. An empress who was a Queen of Queens owing to her undisputed perfections. And around them a host of archdukes and archduchesses, princes, dukes and gentlemen bearing the highest titles in the land.

All this was very impressive for a Belgian princess who did not regret her short dresses, because one never regrets them when it is the fashion to wear long gowns, but who was nevertheless very astonished to find herself dressed like a grown-up girl.

However, I was not embarrassed, nor was I nervous; I looked at everything with the eyes of a girl who is only interested in her engagement and her lover.

I would have married the prince, had I been asked to do so, on the same day that I received his first ring. I would have gone before the burgomaster and the cardinal with just the same eagerness as I did a year later.

Healthy in body and pure in spirit, brought up in an atmosphere of sincerity and morality under the care of an incomparable mother, but deprived, owing to my rank, of more or less enlightened friends who would have reposed certain womanly confidences in me, I gave my whole soul to my approaching marriage without troubling myself what marriage might mean. I was no longer a creature of this earth. I created a star where my fiancé and I would live together in a divine atmosphere of happiness. The man who was to be my companion on the enchanted road of life, seemed to me the embodiment of all that was beautiful, loyal, generous, and I deemed him as innocent as myself.

My hours of martyrdom and the distressing quarrels were to come later when the inmost recesses of my heart were disclosed by the barbarians of the police court, who made scandalous use of my letters written after my engagement. These letters expressed my love. I had written to the man who was my parents' choice as I would have written to an archangel destined to marry me. I adorned him with the beauty of my most beautiful desires. I transfigured him.

The savages had the effrontery to deduce from these expressions of affection that I was an unstable and deceitful creature.

I put this question to women. Between love as we conceive it and love as we experience it, is there not very often an abyss?

I have been culpable, criminal and infamous to fall into this abyss. Such is the real truth.

Why did my mother—who was so good—and why did the King—who was so experienced in human nature—wish for this marriage, in spite of the disproportion of our ages, and the few claims to universal admiration which my intended husband possessed, apart from his claims to worldly position?

In the first place his mother, who, rightly, loved and respected him, pleaded for him. She credited him with possessing some of her own good qualities.

In the second place, Prince Frederick of Hohenzollern had expressed a wish to ask me in marriage. The King and Queen, who were told of this, did not want, for various reasons, to become closer allied to the house of Berlin. Other suitors, more or less desirable, might also appear on the scene. Therefore, to put an end to this particular scheme and any future uncertainties, I was plighted to Philip of Coburg.

In addition to this the Queen congratulated herself on sending her eldest daughter to the Viennese Court where she herself had shone. She still possessed influence there, and she thought that I would benefit from it. She

was still more satisfied to think that owing to the entailed estates of the Coburgs in Hungary, I should possess material advantages in the country dear to her memory, and where she could often rejoin me, perhaps where she might even retire herself, since she foresaw a future which was gradually to become more and more difficult.

My fiancé again appeared on my horizon. A year passes quickly. The date of my marriage was approaching. I knew all the flowers of rhetoric and the hot-house flowers of a daily courtship. But I asked myself, why did the Queen never leave the archangel and me alone?

My fiancé told me about his travels. He had, he said, brought back some wonderful collections of souvenirs. But I only knew how wonderful these were later. He also told me about his plans for the future, the numerous properties of the Coburgs, etc. I gave myself up to delightful hopes, and described the magnificence of my trousseau, which was enriched with fairy-like gifts of Belgian lace and intricate embroideries.

Finally I tried on the symbolical white robe, under a heavenly veil, a *chef d'œuvre* of Brussels lace, and I was acknowledged fit to manage my long train and to make my curtsies equally as well as the most graceful of the famous young ladies of Saint Cyr.

Loaded with jewels, I soared higher and higher, flattered by homage, congratulations and good wishes, without perceiving that, although my fiancé was so much older than myself, I had now become a certain personality in his dreams and in his thoughts.

The Day after my Marriage

I was praised on all sides in verse and in prose, with or without music, and it seemed that I was a "flower of radiant beauty." I was quite taken with this phrase.

As for my husband—his bearing, his nobility and his prestige were also praised. I remember that he wore his Hungarian military uniform when we received the burgomaster of Brussels, the celebrated M. Ausbach, who came on February 4, 1873, to marry us by the civil code. Then with great pomp we appeared before the Cardinal Primate of Belgium.

An altar was erected in the large drawing-room next the ballroom. I will say nothing about the decorations. The chants and the prayers carried me to heaven, although I by no means forgot the ritual of my marriage and that I was the cynosure of all eyes. It was not a public of kings, but of princes. In the place of sovereigns, whose greatness kept them away, their next of kin were present; the Prince of Wales, the Crown Prince Frederick, the Archduke Joseph, the Duc d'Aumale, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and, finally, a large crowd of those notables who figure in the pages of the *Almanach de Gotha*.

If I once began to describe the details of a ceremony of this magnitude I should never finish. Personally I was not much attracted by it. I am always surprised when, on opening a modern novel, I notice the pains which clever people take to describe the sumptuous ritual of modern marriage. I only know one appropriate description of this nature: that of the "Sleeping Beauty." Fortunate Beauty, whose Court and herself were put to sleep just

at the crucial moment of a marriage which might not have been a happy one.

But where are the fairies now and where are the beasts who know how to talk?

Alas! the fairies have vanished and the beasts speak no more, except the hidden beasts in our souls, and they do not relate pretty fables and stories. They indulge rather in unpleasant realities.

I have taken a long time in coming to the point, but no matter at what cost, it is necessary for me to speak about things which have as yet never been told, but which will explain how the foundations were laid for the drama of my life.

There were hints as to this drama in former days, but I will not refer to the vague tittle-tattle which amused rather than saddened Brussels and its Court.

I am not, I am sure, the first woman who after having lived in the clouds during her engagement, has been as suddenly hurled to the ground on her marriage night, and who, bruised and mangled in her soul, has fled from humanity in tears.

I am not the first woman who has been the victim of false modesty and excessive reserve, attributable perhaps to the hope that the delicacy of a husband, combined with natural instincts, would arrange all for her, but who was told nothing by her mother of what happens when the lover's hour has struck.

However, the fact remains that on the evening of my marriage at the Château of Laeken, whilst all Brussels was

dancing amid a blaze of lights and illuminations, I fell from my heaven of love to what was for me a bed of rock and a mattress of thorns. Psyche, who was more to blame, was better treated than myself.

The day was scarcely breaking when, taking advantage of a moment when I was alone in the nuptial chamber, I fled across the park with my bare feet thrust into slippers, and, wrapped in a cloak thrown over my nightgown, I went—to hide my shame in the Orangery. I found sanctuary in the midst of the camellias, and I whispered my grief, my despair, and my torture, to their whiteness, their freshness, their perfume and their purity, to all that they represented of sweetness and affection, as they flowered in the greenhouse, and lit up the winter's dawn with a warmth, silence and beauty which gave me back a little of my lost Paradise.

A sentry had noticed a grey form scurrying past him in the direction of the Orangery. He approached, and listening, recognized my voice. He hastened to the château. No one knew what had become of me. Already the alarm had been discreetly raised. A messenger galloped to Brussels. The telephone was not then invented.

The Queen came to me without any delay. My God! what a state I was in when I regained my apartment; I would not let anyone approach me except my maids. I was more dead than alive.

My mother stayed with me for a long time; she was as motherly as she alone could be. There was no grief which her arms and voice could not assuage. I listened

to her scolding me, coaxing me and telling me of duties which it was imperative for me to understand. I dared not object to these on the ground that they were totally different from those which I had been led to expect.

I finished by promising to try and conquer my fears, to be wiser and less childish.

I was scarcely seventeen years old; my husband had completed his thirty-first year. I had become of his "goods and chattels." One can see, alas! how he has treated me.

CHAPTER VII

Married

ON the morrow of such a painful episode in the life of two newly married people I witnessed with bitter grief the preparations for my departure to Austria. Never was Belgium so dear to me; never had she appeared more beautiful.

Concealing my tears, I said good-bye to all those who had known me as a child and a young girl, and who had loved and served me, and to all the familiar objects in the Château of Laeken, where everything appealed to my affection. Little did I foresee that I should be looked upon one day as a stranger there. What do I say—a stranger? No, as an "enemy," rather!

We departed, according to the expression sacred to custom, on our honeymoon. But there are honeymoons and honeymoons.

I should have liked to have taken certain personal maids with me. I was not allowed even to dream of such a thing. The Coburg Palace had its own servants. It was explained to me that the introduction of a strange element would break the domestic harmony of this high-toned abode. I had therefore to content myself with a Hungarian maid, quite a proficient person, but who was not like one of my own faithful servants.

And everything was the same. My tastes, my prefer-

ences only passed muster after having been approved by a family council.

Unfortunately the austerity which prevailed in this family council chamber did not reign in the palace at all hours and in all the rooms. This I soon discovered.

But before arriving at the Coburg Palace we stayed at Gotha, where Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg, the Prince Regent, and his wife, Princess Alexandrine, gave their niece a warm welcome.

The duke was a true gentleman, one of the personalities of his time, who became one of my favourite uncles. He spoke, with affection, of his friend Count Bismarck, and then touched on less serious topics, as I was curious to know about the people and things belonging to this Germany to which I found myself so closely related by marriage.

I have already said that it was as natural for me to speak German as it was for me to speak French, since it was the general rule to do so at the Court of Brussels. Has not Belgium everything to gain by being bi-lingual and by serving as an intermediary between the Latin and the German countries? Less than Alsace and Luxembourg but nevertheless a little like them, should she not benefit by the two diverse cultures?

On leaving Gotha we went to Dresden, thence to Prague, and finally to Budapest and glowing Vienna.

Let us pass, however, from these princely visits and the sameness of their receptions to more intimate things. The interest in speaking of these consists in the necessity

for me to lay bare my slandered life, and to relate how, having fallen from heaven, I rose to a belief in better things.

But years and years were destined to pass before my existence was again embellished by a glimpse of the ideal, apart from the joys of maternity.

My first recollection of something amiss in my rôle of Princess of Coburg is, that every evening at our formal banquets my husband took care that I should be served abundantly with good wines. I ultimately became capable of distinguishing a Volney from a Chambertin, a Voslaver from a Villanyi, and one champagne from another.

The body thus trained to the practice of something more or less akin to gluttony, the soul of necessity followed its example. I extended my range of literature, and I became familiar with books which the Queen and the Princess Clémentine would not have believed could have been given me by the person by whom they were put into my hands.

In the days of my open rebellion people were scandalized by certain liberties of speech and manner which I wilfully exaggerated. But who first taught me them? And, once again, where should I have gone and what would have become of me if God had not put in my way the incomparable man who alone had the courage to say to me: "Madame, you are a King's daughter. You are about to go astray. A Christian woman revenges herself on infamy by rising above it and not by descending to its level."

And so, stunned and intoxicated in every way, I reviewed the family of Coburg and their various palaces and castles. Finally I found the palace in Vienna which was destined to be my principal residence.

I positively turned cold on entering it. The palace certainly looks imposing from the outside, but the interior is most gloomy, especially the staircase. I only like the *salon* in "point de Beauvais" originally intended for Marie Antoinette and her ladies-in-waiting.

My room made me shudder. What? Was this really the setting which had been prepared to receive the freshness of my seventeen years! A student of Bonn, where the prince had graduated, might have liked it, but a girl, who had only recently become a young woman! . . . Impossible. Try, then, to imagine a fairly large room, the walls fitted half-way up with small cupboards of dark wood with glass doors, and blue curtains behind which I never wished to look! Certain pieces of furniture were Gothic in style. In the centre of this paradise stood an immense glass case full of souvenirs of the prince's travels; stuffed birds with long beaks, armour, bronzes, ivories, Buddhas and pagodas; my heart sickened at the sight. And, worse than all, there was no private entrance or annexe, only a narrow dark corridor, which was used by the servants. To get to my room I had to pass through that of the prince, which was approached through a kind of salon; all the rooms communicated and showed not a vestige of taste. Massive old furniture upholstered in rep a century old was offered to the eyes of youth!

All was old, ordinary, sombre. Hardly a flower, nothing comfortable, nothing matching. As to a bathroom, there was not a sign of one. There were only two baths in the whole palace; they were far away from each other, and of positively archaic construction. And, as for the rest—it is better left unsaid!

My first active objection was to this anti-hygienic organization, and the lack of necessities for my immediate use. This state of things almost broke my heart. I was told, however, that the illustrious grandparents were quite content with what had been given me.

One knows that use is a second nature. Princess Clémentine did not notice the things which troubled me, and even the glass case with the stuffed birds charmed her. She admired her son's collection, fortunately without knowing or understanding all that it contained, as in our palace of Budapest I saw some very unique pieces; souvenirs of Yoshivara which a young woman could not look at without blushing, even after an expert hand had lifted the veil from her inexperienced eyes.

What a school! However, thanks to the Bacchic régime organized by my husband, things went on indifferently well after the storm of our début in domesticity.

Our fundamental incompatibility first appeared at the Coburg Palace in the presence of the Princess Clémentine, over a cup of café-au-lait. On our honeymoon the prince had told me that a well-born person should never drink black coffee. Such is the German conviction. Germany can no more imagine coffee without milk than she can

imagine the sun without the moon. However, ever since I ceased to take nature's nourishment I have never been able to drink milk, I have never drunk it, and I never do. My husband took it into his head that he would make me drink milk, especially in coffee, as, if he failed, the traditions, the constitutions, and the foundations of all that was German would be shattered.

The discussion took place before the Princess Clémentine, who always drank milk in her coffee. But her affectionate kindness could not overcome the stubbornness of my stomach. I could see that I was offending her. Her son became furious to the extent of saying most painful and unpleasant things, and I answered him in like manner. The princess, although deaf, felt that something was the matter, and we restrained ourselves on her account, but the blow had fallen; henceforth we both had café-au-lait on the brain!

I relate little episodes like this because life is a mosaic of small things which cement great desires or high sentiments, and which of themselves express the daily necessities to which we are slaves. Human existence is a tragedy or a comedy in two acts which take place in the drawing-room and the bedroom. The rest is only accessory.

What a bungle nearly all people of exalted rank make in fulfilling the obligations of appearing to live! We forget the words of Franklin: "Time is the material of which life is made."

I reproach myself bitterly to-day for having led such an empty life, for having lived such an existence of anguish

of mind. I have not sufficiently known the true life, which is that of the soul; if I had realized this, with what distinguished personages I might have associated, with what authors, scholars and artists have surrounded myself!

But could I really have done so?

My highest desires were criticized, contradicted and repulsed.

The prince, my husband, from the standpoint of his superior age, instructed me in everything.

People were afterwards astonished at my expenditure —at my numerous gowns. . . .

Oh, God! I nearly became mad through the force of this continual restraint. One fine day I burst my bonds!

Oh! this palace of Coburg, this residence where the slightest frivolous fancy, the smallest evidence of Parisian taste imported from Brussels, provoked harsh words; this soupçon of a *décolletage* which caused jealousy; this desire to live a little for myself, without being submissive to the rigorous routine of a barracks which aroused such storms. Mon Dieu! when I think of all this—the stuffed birds, the unhealthy books, the dirty jokes, and the daily miseries of my life—I am at a loss to know how I endured it. I ask myself how I could have resisted so long? It was worse in the long run than being shut up in the madhouse. The crime is sometimes less horrible than the criminal. There are moral deformities which constitute an offence at every turn, and in the end one becomes exasperated with them. I do not know to what extremes I should have gone if this

life had continued. I have always looked upon the strength which permitted me, at the age of twenty, to break away from my princely cage as a direct help from Heaven. Even had I been able to foresee to what excess hatred and fury would reach, I would still have broken away. A palace can become a hell, and the worst hell is that where one suffocates behind gilded windows. Titles count for nothing—a bad household is a bad household. Two people are united, the same chain holds them irrevocably together. Certain couples manage to get on, others cannot. It is a question of temper and conditions. Neither the prince nor I could accustom ourselves to the differences which separated us. This permanent conflict, which was at first latent and which afterwards became open war, daily widened the abyss between us into which so much finally disappeared.

But amidst all this bitterness my days had their golden hours. Everything was not disagreeable. Storms sometimes have a ray of sunshine. But those I experienced were of the most devastating nature!

I have said that I respected Princess Clémentine and that I was attracted to her, but her deafness, which sadly aggravated her natural dignity, and her spirit of another age which made her always appear to be living in state and etiquette, often repulsed my natural outbursts of affection. Every time when the prince and I arrived at irreparable differences, and my mother-in-law, because of her great age, submitted to the influence of her son, I still could not help feeling towards her the same sentiment

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of gratitude which I had for her former kindness and her superiority of mind.

Besides my husband, Princess Clémentine had two sons and two daughters. One of her sons, Auguste of Saxe-Coburg, was to me what Rudolph of Habsburg would have been, a brother-in-law who was a brother. Until his death, which took place, if I remember rightly, in 1908 at Paris, where, under the name of Count Helpa, he lived a life of pleasure and mixed in the best society, he retained the same affection for me that I had for him.

The three other Coburgs, Philip, Auguste and Ferdinand, did not resemble one another either physically or morally. Auguste was like the Orleans family. In him the blood of France triumphed over the blood of Germany. In the veins of Ferdinand, who became the adventurous Tsar of Bulgaria, I do not know what blood flowed. Let us pass on quickly. I shall have occasion to return to him and his throne of surprises when I speak of the Court of Sofia.

Of the two daughters, Clotilde and Amélie, the latter lives always in my memory. A gentle victim of love for an excellent husband, she died after losing him. United to Maximilian of Bavaria, the cousin of Louis II, Amélie was a lily of France that strayed into Germany. She had the good luck to meet a being worthy of herself in the patriarchal Court of Munich, which Prussian folly has rendered so unhappy. They loved each other and they lived for love, concealing their happiness as much as possible. Maximilian died suddenly—thrown from his

horse whilst riding. Amélie was inconsolable and did not long survive him.

The idea never struck her brother Philip, her brother Ferdinand, or above all her sister Clotilde, that one could die—or live—for love!

Our double connexion with the house of France brought me a happy diversion from my troubles at the Coburg Palace, as well as in the country, in the shape of visits of members of the Royal family whom I had more or less known in my youth. The springtime of my life was full of their marks of affection.

I have seen the birth of the hopes of my niece Dorothée, the daughter of the Archduchess Clotilde, my sister-in-law, when she became engaged to Duke Philip of Orleans.

I confess I had no faith in the future, being sceptical as to Royalist France, and doubtless it was an effect of the general surroundings, but I fancied that the gold lilies embroidered on the robe of the beautiful bride would have vanished from her train long before she reached the Elysée, the Tuileries or the Louvre. I could not, however, see without emotion the closed crown which adorned the "queen" on the day of her wedding.

Ah! this dream of a crown; how many heads it turns, or rather how many heads it has turned! For now one is obliged to reflect on things in general, and although I am a stranger to French politics I owe as much recognition as consideration to the Republic, where I have found, together with the security of just laws, the respect due to

misfortune, and the courtesy which Republicans know how to extend, even to princesses. Still I cannot help following the career of the "King, in anticipation"—my nephew the Prince of Orleans, with some degree of curiosity.

For him everything happens on the banks of the Seine, the Garonne, the Rhone, and the other watercourses of the most beautiful country on the face of the earth; but the worst that I wish Philip of Orleans is that he should never have to exchange his yachting cap, which becomes him so well, for the crown of Saint Louis. He is certainly handicapped in life. More than ever to-day when it is advisable for a king to have a queen. But fate has willed that the great marriage of Philip of Orleans and Marie Dorothée of Habsburg, which was one of the joys of the Coburg Palace, and the occasion of the most gorgeous receptions, should turn out contrary to what it promised.

On one occasion I counted the Royal or princely houses wherein the wind of discontent already whispered. I arrived at a startling total. Taking it all round in every kind of society, the average number of happily married people is not very high. But the nearer one gets to the people, and to their good sense and work, the better does family life become, because they tolerate each other's failings much more wisely and agree to help each other, until they finish by knowing a kind of happiness, which is only achieved by the knowledge of common imperfections.

My life at Coburg would have been still more painful

if from time to time it had not been varied by changes of residence and travel.

In order not to digress from the family circle, I will only say a few words about three towns where I had relations, and where I stayed with them, or near them, as Princess of Coburg—Cannes, Bologna and Budapest.

First, I will mention Budapest, which was one of the most attractive cities of the world, and will be again when the reign of Bolshevism is over. In the old Buda the ancient East has left its traces; in Pest, the modernity of the West has become apparent. I knew something of it in 1918.

I loved Budapest, and I preferred the small Coburg Palace in the Hungarian capital and its charming receptions to our home and our entertainments in the capital of Austria. The atmosphere was different from that of Vienna, and I was pleased to find myself in the neighbourhood of the good Archduke Joseph, my mother's brother, who was so warm-hearted and so dear to me. His palace was at Buda, and his château was some hours' distance from the town. They had no disadvantages except as dwellings of my aunt and my sister-in-law Princess Clotilde, who were very different from the affectionate and sincere Amélie.

The archduke was a kind man who did not misjudge or censure my extravagant fancies.

In the first year of our marriage my husband and I spent the anniversary of my birthday, February 18, with the archduke at Alauth. There had been a heavy fall of

snow the day before, and I said, "I do not want any presents, but please let me drive a sledge to-morrow; I have such a wild wish to drive one; it will be my first experience!"

The Archduchess Clotilde was usually an open-hearted person, but she was nevertheless endowed with certain straight-laced characteristics, and she frowned severely.

It was no use to beg or to implore. The prince forbade the sledge drive. They metaphorically relegated me to a dark cupboard with dry bread to eat; they kept me under such close observation that I could not go out at all, either on foot, on horseback, or in a sledge.

The archduke arrived on the scene. I was still furious. . . . Oh! certainly, it is evident that I did not look on the bright side of things; my character has always been one which resented foolishness and wickedness.

The archduke questioned me. I told him the whole story. "Louise," he cried, "you are right a hundred times; first of all because at your age and when one is pretty, as you are, one is always right. We will go out at once for a drive in the snow."

He rang, and ordered two Hungarian horses to be harnessed to a large sledge fit for the chariot of Apollo, in which he seated me, wrapped in my furs. He took the reins and we drove off at great speed, accompanied by a confidential servant. I felt myself akin to the angels. My puritanical sister-in-law and my puritanical husband dared not say a word.

Society at Budapest was less submissive to Court cere-

monial than that of Vienna, and it was in consequence natural and more audacious. I remember a certain ball on the Ile Marguerite, the pearl of the casket of the Danube, when the prince was angry and did not wish me to waltz. I was inundated with invitations, to which my husband replied by saying that at the Court of Brussels I had only learned to dance the quadrille and the minuet!

The quadrille! The minuet! People were quite worried. They understood what it means to waltz in Hungary, and a waltz on the banks of the Danube to the strains of gipsy violins is a thing which cannot be surpassed. And now—now—they import from America dreary stuff, dull and epileptic in movement, and they call it by all sorts of names after trotting or galloping animals out of Noah's Ark. The waltz will always remain as the incomparable queen of dances to those who know how to dance.

One of those who asked me to dance was bolder than the rest, and, taking no notice of the prince's excuse, he said: "But surely Her Highness knows how to waltz," and at these words I was swept away from the domain of authority by my audacious partner, a Magyar, who thus hurled me into the whirlpool of the dance. I confess I never stopped dancing for the remainder of the night. The prince was furious, but as he was overwhelmed with compliments on my beauty and my success, he was obliged, *nolens volens*, to smile!

I recall the scene which took place at our departure. Fortunately we were asked to embark on a wonderfully

illuminated boat which took us along the beautiful river to the nearest point to our palace, and this delightful journey was made to the sounds of the music, sometimes wild and sometimes languorous, which can only be heard to perfection in this country.

Had it the effect of Orpheus's lute? I was not condemned to die at sunrise like poor Scheherazade. But why did she not dance instead of relating stories?

At Bologna and Cannes I saw a section of society which has now disappeared. This was to be met with at the residence of the Duchesse de Chartres, and at the Duc de Montpensier's at the Caprara Palace. In Italy certain of the greatest Italian aristocrats were surrounded by the noblest names of France; on the Côte d'Azur it was more of a butterfly world, in which shone some of the most resplendent Parisian beauties.

Where should I be if I allowed myself to evoke the shades of many of those whom I have known during my lifetime? Already all is silent, already forgetfulness has begun. Oh, vanity of vanities! But at least I will say how much I was enchanted by Cannes, and by the refined taste of French elegance. The war has transformed this town, once sought after by the élite of society. I have read that, overrun and noisy, it has lost the discreet *cachet* which was once its particular character and charm. What a pity!

There is everything and yet nothing to say about the life of worldly people who are merely worldly people and nothing more. True, I could fill a library were I to describe

in detail the fashionable records of my past. But of what interest would that be? I should but pander to the social curiosity that is satisfied by the reports of the doings of society, which, knowing the necessity of polishing its lustre daily in order to retain its brightness, provides the newspapers with the names of the people it receives, and the details of the receptions it gives—merely to satisfy that commonplace curiosity which is, unhappily, the foundation of human nature, and its desires and self-esteem.

It will be better perhaps for me to terminate this rough sketch of my life as Princess of Coburg, before coming to the events which led to the final *dénouement*, by a few facts concerning my children. I have been, I believe, a good mother. I have wished to be, and I have, at least, the feeling that I was a good mother for a very long time. I lavished much care and tenderness upon my children.

This will only appear natural to women whom maternity makes true women, and to whom it represents honour and glory. They must, however, allow me to say that maternity is sometimes more difficult than one thinks, when one has to consider the difficulties which are often raised by the father of the child—there are situations when being a mother is a constant trial.

Happy are those whom a peaceful and normal life allows leisure to watch beside a cradle. Nevertheless, I knew happiness with my first-born son Leopold, who saw the light in 1878 at our Château of Saint Antoine, in Hungary.

The Queen was present, very delighted at being a grandmother. The arrival of this child, a boy, heir to the titles, appendages and functions of the family, temporarily appeased the quarrels between the prince and myself. There was a lull in the storm, which lasted for some little time. The influence of the Queen had its effect upon my husband. I myself, absorbed by my maternal duties, made great resolutions to be patient and wise in the future.

I dreamt wonderful dreams beside the cradle of my son. . . . Oh, cruel fate, against which I was destined to be powerless. When he grew up, and as the influence of environment exerted itself, Leopold became less and less my child. I wished him to be loyal and courageous. Was he not to carry a sword? What a knightly soul did I not wish to forge in him! But his father claimed the right to guide him. Very soon he belonged to me no longer.

Leopold reached the age of reason just when I had thrown off the shackles of an existence which had become atrocious. He believed that, having refused to continue to be the Princess of Coburg, I had thereby appropriated the hundreds of millions which one day should have come to him from his grandfather, and which I should throw to the winds by my folly. So I have known the hatred which nature cannot conceive—the hatred of a son for his mother. I have shed the tears which are shed by mothers who are struck down by their own flesh and blood. But God knows that each time my children, infatuated with the greed for

money, which is indeed the root of all evils, have made me suffer, I have always forgiven them.

When Leopold died in such a frightful way that I cannot even mention it, he had not belonged, in my belief, for a long time to this world; but it was not I who was affected by this terrible punishment which terminated the lineage of the eldest scion of the house of Saxe-Coburg. He who was stricken was the father who had formed this misguided son in his own likeness!

I think he has survived in order that he may have time for repentance.

When my daughter Dora was about to be born in 1881, I had such a dread of the presence of her father that I did all I could to hide the imminent hour of my deliverance. I did not wish the prince to be near me at this painful moment; I wanted him to go out, in ignorance that I was in the throes of travail. It happened in this way. The birth took place in our palace at Vienna, and I quite succeeded in astonishing my world. I evaded, during the time of my suffering, a presence which could only have aggravated it. The midwife who was with me had not even time to go and fetch the Royal Accoucheur, who arrived after it was all over.

Dora was my second and my last child. She promised to be a pretty girl; she was taller than myself, very fair and rather shortsighted. She had the misfortune to marry Duke Gunther of Schleswig-Holstein, brother of the Empress Augusta, the wife of William II. "Misfortune?" my readers will say; "that is the usual opinion of a

mother-in-law." They will see later that the word misfortune is conformable to the facts which touch contemporary history. I will say nothing more.

My daughter has no children. If she had, they would have been told that their grandmother was the most wicked of women, if not the maddest, because she often said to her son-in-law, as well as to the Prince of Coburg and certain dignitaries of Vienna and elsewhere, who were the accomplices and agents of the persecution by which she was overwhelmed:

"You have only one end in view, and that is to take away all that remains to me—my liberty. But there is justice and you will be punished!"

They have been.

Ah! if instead of making me suffer martyrdom, or allowing me to be made a martyr, some of my own relations had dared come to me, openly or in secret! . . . I am a woman, I am a mother. I do not affirm that I was not guilty of wrong. I only affirm this: they always lied to me. They always talked to me of the honour and virtue of the family, but, above it all, I heard the cry of "*Money! money! money!*"

CHAPTER VIII

My Hosts at the Hofburg—the Emperor Francis Joseph and the Empress Elizabeth

SINCE defeat has overthrown in one day thrones which were the foundation of the world of Germany, I sometimes pass from the Ring towards the Graben by the Hofburg, the ancient Imperial Palace of this city of Vienna where I am now writing. I can see from the Fransenplatz (the large inner court) the windows of the rooms which formerly saw me received by the guards and chamberlains with the honours due to my rank. These windows are now closed, empty and silent. In Vienna everything seems dead. The old Hofburg has ceased to exist. The new Hofburg, an outward symbol of vanished hopes, is an unfinished building. It bears witness to the downfall of an Empire.

Of all the princesses and archduchesses belonging to the vanished Court, I am the only one remaining in Vienna, loved, I believe, by the people, and respected by those in authority.

There is one city in the world in which I have lived for a long time. It has been the scene of my "crimes." This city, after it abandoned all pretence of honour, truth and virtue, has now reserved for me my right to speak, and, whilst abolishing titles, has left me mine.

I stand alone in the ruins of a Power which was cruel to me.

I have known the " justice " of the Court and that of the Emperor Francis Joseph. I have learned that a princess has not the same legal rights as the rest of the world. For her, secret arrangements exist which are applied without the judges having anything to say, or, if they do, they only carry out certain orders. They disguise these with all kinds of pretexts. In my case the excuse was that of madness.

It would be impossible to-day to tax a rebellious conscience with insanity. It would be impossible to accuse a victim of causing impossible scandals if she dared appeal for help. No one can be thrown by force into a madhouse, where the superintendent says that you are not mad and yet is obliged to keep a guard over you. He had his orders! They called these "*une affaire de cour!*"

I do not think it would require many criminal attempts of this nature to obtain a sentence from a Divine justice which no hypocrisy of words or deeds and no machinery of human power can deceive.

But why should not those who were guilty of an immoral and cowardly policy be the only ones to expiate their faults? A whole nation is at this moment expiating the decadence and the downfall of the Court of Vienna. Yes, the poor people, who are so good, so duped, so resigned, so industrious and so much to be pitied, are now expiating the crimes of their rulers!

When I arrived at the Austrian Court in 1875 Francis Joseph was forty-five years old.

He was always distinguishable at a distance by his gallant bearing in uniform. At close quarters he gave one the impression of possessing a certain amount of good humour, which was contradicted by the severity of his glance. He was a narrow-minded man, full of false and preconceived ideas, but he possessed from his upbringing and from the traditions of Austrian politics certain formulas and mannerisms, which enabled him to keep afloat for a long time before he was finally engulfed in the sea of blood in which the Imperial galley ultimately foundered. But, stripped of his rank and ceremonial, devoid of routine or receptions, audiences and speeches, he was nothing but a fool. At his birth, Nature deprived him of a heart. He was an emperor but he was not a man. He is best described as an automaton dressed as a soldier.

The Emperor at first made a great impression on me when my husband presented me to him as the new Princess of Coburg. I listened to his amiable and polished phrases, which I found difficult to answer becomingly. They were usually so banal that almost before leaving his presence I had already forgotten what he had said. It was almost always like this, except on one memorable occasion which I will describe later.

I do not know anyone who remembers a single word uttered by Francis Joseph that was worth repeating. His conversation in the Imperial circle was disconcertingly

cold and poor. He never became animated except when talking scandal, but that was generally in the apartment of Madame Schratt, who constituted alike his refuge and his relaxation, where he was really "at home" and where he was simply "Franz" or "Joseph."

I have seen Madame Schratt at the Burg Theatre. Her influence (if she ever had any, other than that of permitting the Emperor to escape from the insufficiencies which constituted the fatalities of his life) was not injurious to any living soul.

An actress at the Comédie Française of Vienna, pretty, and honest by nature, Katti Schratt was a "Brohan," and her gaiety of heart at least pleased the Sovereign. He first gave her a peaceful and an assured position, and then one fine evening he quietly introduced her to the Court, where the Empress resigned herself admirably to this Imperial audacity. She was quite satisfied in knowing that Francis Joseph was now methodical in his passions, had curtailed his excesses and had chosen a confidante who did not pretend to be anything more than a recreation for him. There was a great difference between Madame Schratt and Madame de Maintenon. There was a still greater difference between Francis Joseph and Louis XIV.

But so far as actual looks went, the Emperor might easily have been taken for his *maître d'hôtel* had it not been for his uniform and his surroundings. Seen at close quarters he was a very ordinary person. Two bad habits, however, were noticeable in him: at the least perplexity he pulled and massaged his side-whiskers, and at dinner

he frequently looked at his reflection in the blade of his knife. As for the rest of his actions, he ate, he drank, he slept, he walked, he hunted, he spoke according to the accepted ritual laid down by the circumstances of the hour, the day, and the calendar. These mannerisms were hardly disturbed by revolutions, wars or misfortunes. He greeted his calamities with the same expression with which he noticed if it were raining when he was about to leave for Ischl.

When his son killed himself, when his wife was assassinated, he did not lose one ounce of flesh; his step was as firm as ever, and his hair just as faultlessly dressed.

The funeral ceremonies over, nothing changed in Austria. Francis Joseph still continued to speak in just the same tones of the love of his people towards himself, and of his love for them.

And that same evening he was with Madame Schratt. To this man devoid of brilliance, without courage, and without justice, I owe the misfortunes of my life.

At the time when he should have filled his place as Sovereign and head of the house where I was concerned, he did not do so because he was afraid.

On two occasions only he behaved differently *à propos* of what concerned me; these circumstances were not, however, decisive. A man is not judged by the way he helps you out of a carriage, but by his behaviour in a big fire; he does not draw back before the flames in his effort to save you!

Photo : Boute

PRINCESS VICTOR NAPOLEON
(Princess Clémentine of Belgium)

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Francis Joseph was incapable of throwing himself into the fire in order to save anyone. He could not be depended upon for any help in danger. He would have been afraid of spoiling his uniform, or of disarranging his whiskers!

Ah! I can easily understand the despair of his son and his wife, whose only thought in life was to escape from this nonentity.

The Emperor's brother, the Archduke Louis Victor, was the instigator of the hatred of which I was the victim. This man was later to know the tortures of a dishonourable exile, and he died dishonoured. God has punished him. I have seen His might strike this guilty man, who started the persecutions from which I had to suffer.

For many years he laid his devotion at my feet. All Vienna knew it; the Emperor included, and he better than most people, because scandal was his daily bread. To him it was almost an affair of State to know whether the Archduke Louis Victor would succeed in vanquishing the citadel of my virtue.

Nevertheless, the prince could be pleasing when he chose; his was an ardent nature, the excessive inquisitiveness of which dragged him eventually into the scandal of public punishment.

I resigned myself to receive his compliments and his flowers with patience. We all know the exigencies of the world. I had to endure the assiduity of an archduke, the brother of the Emperor, with a smile. But the smile has

been especially given by Nature to woman in order to enable her occasionally to conceal her thoughts!

Unfortunately Louis Victor, jealous of the worthy sentiments with which another, who was not a "prince," had inspired me, lost his patience, and from being the object of his love I became the object of his hatred. I own that I had a taste for satirical repartee which I had inherited from the King and which made me many enemies. Was the archduke offended at a little plain speaking? Wounded vanity is prompt to avenge itself. I had henceforth in him an open enemy. He swore that he would force me to leave the Court.

I had inspired jealousy. What woman has not? My rivals ensconced themselves around my former admirer. The usual intrigues began. My freedom of life was attacked by some charitable souls whose only thought was to destroy it, aided by a rejected Don Juan. The archduke was not long in arranging the necessary details. People commenced to talk of the notice which I took of that honourable man, the only person who has filled my life. I have always given him my whole confidence and esteem.

The Archduke Louis Victor went to his brother and told him that he had seen me with his own eyes in a popular restaurant at night, *tête-à-tête* with a Uhlan officer.

Carried away by indignation at such forgetfulness of my rank, three noble Furies, whom I will not mention, and who possessed exclusive rights to represent virtue

on earth, made it known to His Majesty that if I were allowed to attend the coming State ball they would turn their backs upon me in the presence of the Imperial circle.

My sister, who was told of this uproar, questioned me and warned me. I had no difficulty in discovering whence the plot emanated, and I protested my innocence to Stéphanie. On the evening when the Archduke Louis Victor had told his brother he had seen me at the restaurant, I had not quitted the palace. I may add that I have *never*, *never*, *never* sat in a restaurant *tête-à-tête* with anyone. When I have had occasion to appear at a dinner or supper in public I have always been accompanied by one or more persons of my entourage.

And what was more, at the identical hour mentioned by my calumniator I was with the prince my husband, and we were having one of those discussions which constituted the daily storms of our existence. The prince was there to witness this, besides which, the servants could attest that I had not given any orders for my carriage and that I had not left the palace. So nothing would have been easier than to have contradicted the archduke and his virtuous friends.

My sister was quite convinced, but, not wishing to place herself between the devil and the deep sea, she said that she thought it would be as well if I appealed to the Emperor in person. The cabal, however, acted quickly. Francis Joseph forestalled my request by summoning *me*. I saw him in Stéphanie's room. I was in such a state of

righteous rage that, alas! I was unable to control myself in the presence of this infamous man.

First of all I thanked the Sovereign for his audience, and I said (mastering my temper with difficulty) that he ought to defend me and take my part; that I was the butt of the attacks of a miserable cabal, and he ought to put an end to it by punishing the slanderer. I asked him to make an inquiry, as I had a perfect right to one. The rest of my words may be left to the imagination. As the Emperor knew what defence I should probably put forward, he had prepared his answer according to the formula of one of the heads of the Imperial Chancellery who had trained him in his youth. This is what he said: "Madam, all that has nothing to do with me; you have a husband; it is his affair. I think, however, that for the present you had better take a trip somewhere, and not appear at the next State ball."

"But, Sire, I am a victim; you make me out a criminal."

"Madam, I have listened to my brother, and when Victor has spoken. . . ." He finished with a sign which was Imperial and definite.

I was not the kind of woman to suffer such iniquity in silence. But I managed to conceal my contempt, and replied:

"The future will reveal, Sire, which of us has lied, the Archduke or I." I then made my regulation curtsy, and the Emperor left the room.

On my return to the Coburg Palace I went to my

husband and told him that I trusted to his honour to destroy the abominable plot in which I was involved, and that he must send his seconds to the Archduke Victor.

The Prince of Coburg coldly answered that if I had lost the Imperial favour *he* had no wish to lose it by fighting a duel with an archduke who was the brother of the Sovereign.

After the chivalrous Emperor I had indeed encountered another Galahad; I was furious, but I could do nothing. My fury, however, brought about unlooked-for results. The prince did not wish to remember that I was at the palace on this particular evening. He declared that he would not contradict the assertion made by my slanderer. This was the last straw. From that hour my mind was made up. I would not remain any longer with a husband who had abandoned me in this disgraceful manner. I would listen to the voice that said: "Madam, you are lost in the world where you live; it is cowardly and perverse." But my family feeling proved stronger than my anger. I said to the prince: "We must separate and regain our liberty. But we have children. Let us avoid a scene. Let us travel for a year, and if at the end of that time we have not found a better way of living together we will part; you must go your way and I will go mine."

To the mind of a man such as the Prince of Coburg these words were the most awful imaginable. The prospect of a separation or a divorce would be known to millions of people, to the King and others, and not only

to the father of my children; such a thing was impossible. He said I should hear more about this. And I did.

Since I am telling the whole story from the beginning I must give the other reasons for Francis Joseph's inconceivable attitude towards me. These were more or less political, and I do not wish to dwell on politics, and still less on any affecting him. But at the same time I am writing for the purpose of adding a few fresh facts to the history of this time, as well as for the purpose of defending myself from false accusations.

Francis Joseph refused to help me, and he abandoned me from the first moment because he was obliged to be cautious; he therefore left my husband complete liberty to do as he pleased. The Prince of Coburg knew the secret of Meyerling and the termination of Rudolph's despair. Moreover, the prince had a brother Ferdinand who was quartered at the outpost of Nach Oste in Bulgaria. The Coburgs were a power in themselves. Francis Joseph bowed down to them. He chose the lesser of two evils and sacrificed me.

I only knew him to adopt a chivalrous attitude on two occasions. Once when I asked him to change a gentleman-in-waiting attached to my person and that of my husband who made common cause with the Archduke Victor, he immediately granted me my request. Again, when I had entered upon a new life, and was living up to a higher ideal and disregarding the most sinister proofs of an atrocious calumny, it happened that the Prince of Coburg found himself face to face with a man of honour

who was ready to give him satisfaction. My husband put on an air of supreme disdain. The Emperor then reminded him that the uniform of a soldier was intended for more than purposes of show. He advised the Prince of Coburg to fight; he fought.

I believe this was the only military victory that Francis Joseph gained over anyone; and as for the prince, an Austrian general, it was the only battle in which he was personally engaged.

* * * * *

I often think that Providence was very merciful to the Empress in not letting her attain old age, riveted as she was to the chain which dragged the Empire into the abyss of human foolishness and ferocity.

Shall I say that my thoughts go out to her in prayer? She, too, was a martyr; she is only second to the Queen in my daily meditations. The difference in my age and rank kept me, to my great grief, farther apart from her than I should have liked. At the time when I could have drawn nearer to her, I was torn between my yearning for the ideal, and the vanities of the world. If she was a serene empress I was a distressed princess! But I had, however, something in common with her; the love of nature and freedom and the taste for Heinrich Heine.

Without putting this writer on the same pedestal as Goethe, the mind by which I have tried to vivify my own, I have enjoyed many happy hours reading Heine, and the older I have grown the more I have learned to know and

admire the poet who was both an inspired humorist and a philosopher. He was the De Musset of Prussia and Judea, the wit *par excellence* of Europe—Heine had taken from France and given her a unity of gifts, the blending of which promises a race of men, freed from race barriers, moved by the same love of eternal beauty. An indication of the reconciliation which the future will perhaps see.

It is possible that he *was* a Jew; the Apostles were also Jews. But I understand and appreciate the sentiments of the Empress in going to see him at Hamburg, continuing to be on friendly relations with his sister after his death, and lastly in erecting a monument to him at Corfu. Rudolph once said of his mother: "She is a philosopher on a throne." She had truly a great mind.

The day on which I had the honour of being received privately by the Empress was an exciting one for me. I knew that she only wore black, white, grey or violet, so I arranged my toilette without invoking the help of a dressmaker, and if I am to believe the flattery of the Rue de la Paix, I knew how to dress myself; but I confess that, confident as I had now become in matters of dress, I took my time in deciding what to wear on this occasion. In the end I chose a violet gown most tastefully trimmed with grebe and a little velvet toque. I can say without boasting that my toilette was remarked upon and generally admired.

The Empress was delightful. She spoke of the Queen in well chosen, simple terms, as of a friend dear to her.

This was her way of speaking about almost everything. Her conversation was of a high order, but at the same time it was absolutely natural. She scarcely ever spoke harshly, and always in low and pure tones. She possessed a soulful voice—muffled crystal, but crystal all the same. I have never seen a smile like hers; it was like a smile from Heaven; it enchanted me and it affected me, it was at the same time both sweet and grave. She was beautiful, a celestial beauty with something ethereal in the purity of her features and the lines of her figure. No one walked like Elizabeth of Austria; the movement of her limbs was imperceptible, she glided; she seemed to float on the ground. I have often read that some celebrated and adored woman was endowed with "inimitable grace." The Empress Elizabeth truly possessed this inimitable grace. And her large eyes seemed to speak and express a noble language peculiarly their own, which embodied the three virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity.

Bavaria, her birthplace, has retained throughout the ages the essential elements of the Celtic race established as far as the Danube. South Germany also has this ancient European blood in abundance. The Empress represented the most refined characteristics of Celtic beauty. She was not a German type—at least not a type of Central Germany—she expressed to perfection, both morally and physically, all that separated and will continue to separate Munich and Vienna from Berlin.

* * * * *

Recollections crowd upon me when I return in thought

to the Hofburg. I must record some of the most striking.

Thus, I will think of the Archduke John, who was afterwards known as John Orth, the name of one of Maria Theresa's castles on the Danube, the spot preferred of all others by this strange being.

Like Rudolph, with whom he was on terms of great friendship and certain understanding, the Archduke John could not breathe the air of Courts. He once said to me: "You and I, Louise, in many respects are not made to live here."

He interested me, but I did not like his sarcastic spirit. He had none of Rudolph's high ideals. When he disappeared I believed him to be living somewhere in secret, and that there was a possibility of his reappearance. I read in the papers not long ago that a person who might easily have been the Archduke John had just died in Rome, where he had lived for twenty years in seclusion. Rome attracts the solitary and disillusioned souls of the world. If this unknown man was really John Orth, he was indeed able to meditate on the grandeur and decadence of empires.

I will leave this mysterious shadow and speak of two others who have passed, whose existence touches us more closely and constitutes a problem of State to minds interested in this subject.

I see in imagination the ball where Francis Ferdinand d'Este showed by his attachment to the Countess Chotek what would eventually come to pass between them. He

loved her and she loved him; they were married. This was a great event. The countess was clever and intelligent, and she was not personally displeasing to the Emperor. She knew better than to offend this narrow-minded being. But her rôle in the political events of central Europe, from the day when the death of Rudolph allowed her to dream of a throne (even though it was only that of Hungary), was more important than one imagined.

It has occurred to me more than once, that if France had known and would have put up with an Austrian policy, she would have found that the Countess Chotek, raised to the rank of Duchess of Hohenberg, had far different ideas from those of Berlin. Unfortunately France committed the fault (and she will forgive me for daring to say so, *en passant*) of separating politics from religion, and of forgetting that religion is the first of all politics. She bound her own hands, bandaged her own eyes, and advanced on Europe. There was very little chance for her to reach the Danube, the most important of all the European routes.

I knew how much the King of the Belgians deplored the blindness of France, and what he said on this subject to more than one distinguished Frenchman. It was to the effect that the disadvantage of democratic governments was that they were obliged to provide numerous schools of thought before they possessed the small number of principles which constitute the foundation and the whole secret of government. The religious principle is not the least of these.

In a country in which statesmen formerly abounded, and which has ended politically through corrupt foolishness, that destroyer of characters and convictions, Countess Chotek, the woman of solid beliefs, came into prominence through the possession of a political brain.

She made Ferdinand d'Este a man capable of action and energy. Her chief fault and that of her husband was that through fear of showing weakness, they did not know how to show kindness. The hereditary archduke and his wife were strict in maintaining their landed possessions, and they taxed the people with great severity.

It needed little to aggravate the latent hatred against the heir to the thrones in a state divided against itself, and, added to this rivalry, jealousy and general restlessness existed, and certain trifling matters due to the severity of Francis Ferdinand and the Duchess of Hohenberg were perfidiously exploited against them. The day of their death was decided, the way was prepared, and the instruments selected. But I must pass over the terrible events of yesterday, the result of which does not justify me to speak.

The hereditary archduke and his wife had a powerful camarilla against them. They were not in need of partisans and they could have opposed cabal after cabal, but their adversaries, who were nearly all hidden, had plans outside the Monarchy.

This is not the place or the moment to discuss the conflict of influences of which Vienna was the battlefield. It will be the work of some penetrating and impartial

genius who will perhaps be in a position to enlighten the world as to the general worthlessness of the Court of Austria during the ten or fifteen years before 1914. He will then make known to the world the history of one of the most formidable conflicts of self-interest and vanity which the world has ever known.

At the Court of Vienna there was a camarilla consisting of a group of men, more or less filled with ambition, who gathered around the Sovereign, guarding every approach to him, and they exploited the Prince to the best of their hatred and avidity. As the Emperor became more and more of a figure-head the old favourites saw themselves confronted with the coming power. This power, for the less important reasons which are known, and for others greater than these, recognized the morganatic marriage of Francis Ferdinand, and the ardent Catholicism of the Duchess of Hohenberg, who, owing to her character and her ambitious dreams for her children, possessed both interior and exterior enemies. There resulted, therefore, a third camarilla, the most secret and the most redoubtable, for the simple reason that, in a Court where individuals fight amongst themselves, they indirectly fight the whole world. They do not betray merely this one and that one —they betray their whole country.

CHAPTER IX

My Sister Stéphanie Marries the Archduke Rudolph, who Died at Meyerling

MY younger sister spent a happy girlhood at Brussels. At the age of nineteen she was a radiant beauty. Without knowing whom she was eventually to marry, she had been encouraged to look forward to making a more advantageous marriage than her eldest sister.

The King had never been very enthusiastic over my marriage with the Prince of Coburg. He had higher ambitions for me. My mother, however, desired the marriage. I have already given her reasons.

To avenge himself for his disappointed hopes, the King intended Stéphanie to marry an heir to a throne. He had thought of Rudolph of Habsburg as a possible husband for her, and the Queen agreed with him. What a daring idea! For however honourable the Royal House of Belgium might be, it did not rank so high as that of Austria.

I was not in ignorance, as I shall shortly relate, of the project of this marriage which began under the most dazzling auspices, and terminated in the most appalling tragedy.

History has been more interested in the final catas-

trophe than in the story of the early days of the married life of Rudolph of Habsburg and Stéphanie of Belgium. I, too, will discuss the finale and describe Rudolph as I knew him on the eve of his death.

Rudolph was then thirty years old. He might easily have called himself "the beloved of the gods." A great Court was at his feet; the most beautiful town in the world, after Paris, was an abode where all might have belonged to him. The people of the Monarchy placed their hopes of the future in him. He had a wife whom everyone envied; a daughter whom he overwhelmed with caresses; a noble and good mother whom he worshipped; and lastly, a father whose great Empire would revert to him; but Rudolph, the ill-fated and unhappy, preferred to die.

Let us, once for all, finish with the legends of Meyerling, and as far as it is possible have done with the lies connected with it. Rudolph of Habsburg committed suicide!

It is said that there is no proof of this. This is wrong; the proof exists. I am able to give it.

The history of the liaison which led Rudolph of Habsburg and Mary Vetsera to the grave has often been told. I will therefore confine myself to relating a few points which are but little known.

There was in the love of the hereditary archduke for Mary Vetsera either a lurid fatality or a sinister influence. . . .

When I was in Vienna shortly before I decided to

write these pages, I was sorting some private papers which recalled me to the period when I was the confidante and friend of Rudolph. Having finished my task, I went for a drive.

At the turning of a crowded street my attention was attracted by the sight of a melancholy looking old woman dressed in a dark costume. My carriage was going slowly at the time, so I could not fail to notice that she seemed crushed by numerous calamities, bent to the ground under the weight of a heavy burden, and she walked close to the buildings, almost touching the walls as she passed. Her face showed utter dejection and horror, and it was seared with innumerable tragic wrinkles. In this funereal apparition I recognized the mother of Mary Vetsera.

What had happened to the smart woman of the world whom I had been accustomed to meet chaperoning her daughter, then in the full bloom of her bewitching youth?

I have only to close my eyes in order to see Mary Vetsera—superb and glowing as she appeared at an evening entertainment given by the Prince of Reuss, the German Ambassador—the last sensational appearance in Viennese society of the girl who was about to become the heroine of the "bloody enigma" of Meyerling.

But the enigma is very simple.

Nevertheless, one must be behind the scenes in order to see all and know all. And this will always be difficult for journalists, who concoct distorted versions of "facts" which are the enemies of "history." Every journalist

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THE ARCHDUKE RUDOLPH

continues to rely on his imagination or on his observations, which vary according to his point of view. If the truth, therefore, is long in coming to light it is not very extraordinary. The astonishing thing about the Press is not so much that it abounds in lies as that it sometimes states the truth.

I had just arrived at the Embassy. The Prince of Reuss left me in order to precede my sister and her husband who were making an official entry.

Rudolph noticed me, and leaving Stéphanie came straight up to me. "She is there," he said without any preamble; "ah, if somebody would only deliver me from her!"

"She" was Mary Vetsera, his mistress of the ardent face. I, too, glanced at the seductress. Two brilliant eyes met mine. One word will describe her: Mary was an imperial sultana, one who feared no other favourite, so sure was she of the power of her full and triumphant beauty, her deep black eyes, her cameo-like profile, her throat of a goddess, and her arresting sensual grace.

She had altogether taken possession of Rudolph, and she longed for him to be able to marry her. Their liaison had lasted for three years.

Mary Vetsera was a member of a bourgeois family of Greek origin with some pretensions to nobility. The family, which was numerous and impoverished, hoped much from the favour of the Heir Apparent. Perhaps the only one who did not concern herself in worldly matters

was a sister of the idol who, unlike her, had not the gift of beauty. Her merit was of a less perishable order. When the drama of Meyerling engulfed Rudolph and his love, this sister of the dead Mary disappeared in a convent.

At the soirée I was struck by my brother-in-law's state of nervous exhaustion (this soirée took place, I may mention, during the second fortnight of January, 1889), but I thought it well to try and calm him by saying a word or two about Mary which would please him, so I remarked quite simply:

"She is very beautiful." Then I looked at my perfectly gowned sister, beautiful, too, in another way, who was making a tour of the room. . . . My heart contracted. All three, Stéphanie, Rudolph and Mary were unfortunate.

Rudolph left me without replying. An instant later he returned and murmured: "I simply cannot tear myself away from her."

"Leave Vienna," I said; "go to Egypt, to India, to Australia. Travel. If you are lovesick that will cure you."

He shrugged his shoulders imperceptibly and spoke no more during the evening.

It was not a pleasant soirée. An atmosphere of uneasiness hung over the brilliant assembly. For my own part, I was so depressed that on my return home I could not sleep.

I had followed, so to speak, all the gradual developments of Rudolph's passion.

Upon my arrival at the Court of Vienna I instantly

liked the archduke, and he gave me his friendship. We were almost the same age. I venture to say that we resembled each other in many points. Our ideas on certain matters were identical. Rudolph confided in me, and I soon placed my confidence in him.

It often happened that after my arrival in Vienna I was not always on my guard. God knows, then, that it was praiseworthy of me to say to the prince, in the intimate manner adopted by those Royal and princely families who had imbibed the patriarchal German spirit:

"Get married. I have a sister who is like me. Marry her." He at once changed the subject by replying: "I like Middzi better." Middzi was a pretty girl, a perfect Viennese type, a Parisian of Eastern Europe. He had two children by her.

But at last wisdom prevailed with me, perhaps my will also, and the finding in maternity the courage to support many things which later grew worse and were no longer bearable. I was not then either "mad, extravagant," or "capable of every kind of deceit," as my persecutors said later.

On the contrary. For a long time my good qualities and virtues were praised by people who later covered me with opprobrium.

At this period my younger sister was said to be a charming happy replica of myself, and therefore Rudolph took the train for Brussels. Stéphanie thus became the second highest personage in Austria-Hungary—the future empress of the Dual Monarchy.

The archduke had no trouble in finding favour in her eyes. He was more than handsome; he was fascinating. He had a slight figure, but it was well proportioned. Notwithstanding his delicate appearance, he possessed a strong constitution. He always made me think of a thoroughbred; he had the shape, the light build and the temper of one. His nervous force equalled his sensitiveness. His pale face reflected his thoughts. His eye, the iris of which was brown and brilliant, assumed varying shades and changed in shape with his expression. He passed rapidly from love to anger, and from anger to love. He was a disconcerting individual, with a captivating, changeful and refined soul.

Rudolph's smile perhaps made a still greater impression. It was the smile of an angelic sphinx, a smile peculiar to the Empress; he had also her manner of speaking; and these traits, added to his winning and mysterious personality, charmed all with whom Rudolph came in contact.

Well read and always ready to welcome new ideas, he sought the society of artists and savants. He was happy in the company of such men as the distinguished painters Canon and Angeli, and Billroth, the eminent professor.

My readers must not expect a pen portrait of my sister. It would be difficult for me to write about her in laudatory phrases since I have said that she resembled me. I will only say that she was better-looking.

Rudolph and Stéphanie made a well-matched pair. A

daughter was born to them—Elizabeth—now Princess of Windisgretz. She owes her material independence to the fortune which she inherited from her grandfather, the Emperor Francis Joseph, and this fact added to her independence of soul has made her a very noticeable personality.

After the birth of her daughter, my sister, almost on the day following her churching, decided to travel. She said that she wanted to go to the seaside and recover from the effects of her confinement. She therefore went to Jersey, where she stayed some considerable time.

Rudolph was opposed to her going away. He negatived the idea by saying that she ought to stay with him, as he was unable to accompany her owing to his duties as Heir Apparent.

But we are a family who, having once decided upon doing anything, are very difficult to persuade to the contrary.

Stéphanie was obstinate. She never thought that a young wife's duty was to remain as long as possible near her husband, especially when he happened to be the man most exposed to the temptations of the Court of Vienna.

Rudolph was greatly vexed at the length of an absence which really could only have been excused on the grounds that it was not so long as it might have been.

The Crown Princess fell ill. When she escaped from the hands of the doctors who had lavished their atten-

tions upon her, Rudolph was told that he would have little chance in the future of again becoming the father of legitimate children.

The blow was severe. From that day he tried to forget his troubles. He strove to banish them by drink, by hunting and other kinds of amusements. This desire for forgetfulness increased.

At this critical moment he met Mary Vetsera. The first time that her beauty was brought to my notice I nearly betrayed myself, having been placed in an unexpected and awkward position, which served to show me the height which passion can attain in a nature such as Rudolph's.

One evening we gave a dinner at the Coburg Palace. The Crown Prince, according to his rank, sat on my right, and my sister sat opposite me.

There was naturally much gossip current in Vienna about the liaison which existed between Rudolph and Mary Vetsera. Stéphanie, thanks to her dignity of character, was silent, but I know that she suffered. I was not afraid of mentioning this delicate subject to Rudolph, and I had expressed my hopes that the gossip was exaggerated. I wished to believe that he was merely the victim of a passing caprice. Yet at my own table, with the servants present, the guests watching (especially my sister's and her husband's) our slightest movements, Rudolph took it into his head to show me, sheltered by the tablecloth and the usual table decorations, the miniature of a woman, hidden in something which appeared to

be a cigarette-case. "This is Mary," said he; "what do you think of her?"

The only thing I could do was to pretend neither to see nor to hear him, and I began to talk to my sister across the table. But after this, of what follies would Rudolph not be guilty? We were not long in finding out!

My brother-in-law died on January 30, 1889, between 6 A.M. and 7 A.M. Three or four days previously my sister came to see me one morning—a rare thing for her to do. I was still in bed, as I was tired. Stéphanie seemed anxious and disturbed.

"Rudolph," said she, "is going to Meyerling, and intends staying there some days. *He will not be alone.* What can we do?"

I raised myself on my pillows. I felt a strange and sinister foreboding. I remembered Rudolph's words at the Prince of Reuss's soirée. "For the love of God," I cried, "go with him!"

But was this possible? Alas! no. I next saw my sister when she was a widow and my brother-in-law was dead, lying in state, with his bloodless face swathed in a white bandage. . . .

On the afternoon of January 28 I was driving in the Prater accompanied by a lady-in-waiting. It was a fine winter's day, and the sunshine was still lingering over Vienna. The horses were proceeding at a walking pace in order that I could enjoy the beauty of the day, and enable me to notice the carriages and the equestrians and acknowledge their salutes.

In the Hauptallee I noticed with astonishment Rudolph, unattended and on foot, chatting in a lively manner with Countess L., who has been so much talked about and who has published so much, but whose rôle in connexion with Rudolph was such that it was not agreeable for me to know her.

The archduke saw my carriage. He made a sign to me to stop, and came up to me. He was then speaking to me for the last time.

I have often asked myself why his trivial words caused me such indefinable anxiety. I still remember the sound of his voice, and I have not forgotten the peculiar look which accompanied his words. Rudolph was pale and feverish; he seemed on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

"I am going to Meyerling this afternoon," he announced. "Tell 'Fatty' not to come to-night, but the day after to-morrow."

"Fatty," to speak with all due respect, was my husband. The Prince of Coburg was always included amongst the boon companions of Rudolph's hunting and other pleasure parties.

I tried to keep my brother-in-law by my side for a moment or two longer, and induce him to say something more. I asked him: "When will you come and see me? It is a long time since you have been."

He replied, looking at me most strangely:

"What would be the use of coming to see you?"

* * * * *

Rudolph stayed at Meyerling from the evening of

January 28 until the morning of the 30th, alone with his mistress. When his guests arrived for the hunt, the gathering was exactly like one of those pagan feasts in the days of Nero and Tiberius, when Death was bidden to the banquet. But the guest condemned to die was the prince himself, and he dragged with him into the abyss the imperious mistress who had first brought him to its brink.

They were found dead in their bedroom. It was a frightful sight, and it was first witnessed by Count Hoyoz, and then by the Prince of Coburg.

If Mary Vetsera was indeed the dominating force, and as Venus would not relinquish her prize, Rudolph, in an access of despair and rage, did not forgive her for placing him in an impossible position; but neither did he pardon himself.

On the morning after a nerve-racking orgy both lovers perished. It all happened with lightning-like rapidity.

It was impossible for Rudolph to continue keeping two households. Impetuous but enslaved, he could not endure a liaison which paralysed his energies, but which he lacked the strength to break, so great was the hold which Mary had obtained over him.

Novelists have often depicted the frightful situation of the thraldom of the body, and the desperate protests of the spirit which can only escape by death.

Rudolph at thirty years of age was utterly out of love with life. He was worn out from living in the atmosphere

of a Court which suffocated him. His death by his own hand was due to several causes, of which the following are the principal:

First, his bitter regret of a marriage which did not give him what he expected, after his disappointment in knowing he could not have a son; the impossibility of realizing the wish to dissolve it—an impious wish in the eyes of his relatives, the Holy See and the Catholic Church; and, finally, the certainty he had as to the chances of the longevity of the Emperor, that heartless being, that living mummy, who had embalmed himself with selfish and petty cares.

Rudolph often remarked: "I shall never reign; he will not allow me to reign."

And if he had reigned?

Ah, if he had reigned! I knew all his plans and his ideas. Of these, I will only say, modernity did not frighten him. The most daring modern idea would have been acceptable to him. He had already destroyed, in imagination, the worn-out machinery of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. But, like pieces of invisible armour held together by expanding links, the constraints, the formulas, the archaic ideas, the ignorance and the disillusions from which he was always wishing to escape, closed in on him. His life was a perpetual struggle against a feeble, worn-out, blind and corrupt Court, the routine of which enslaved his body without shackling his intelligence. He was compelled either to go under or to reign for a time and then to conquer, and throw off the burning gar-

ment of Nessus, open the windows, overthrow the Great Wall of China and chase away the camarilla.

But the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy would perish rather than change. It went to its death with a courier in advance!

The sad news of Rudolph's death reached Vienna on the morning of January 30. General consternation prevailed. In the afternoon one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp came to see if he could obtain more news from me.

I was scarcely able to speak. I had been told that the Prince of Coburg had assassinated my brother-in-law!

There were some charitable souls in Vienna and at Court who did not admit that Rudolph's affection for me was merely fraternal.

Ah, if one only realized to what jealousy and wickedness the highest are exposed!

After the death of the Crown Prince all kinds of stories and scandalous gossip were rife!

I told the aide-de-camp that I knew nothing beyond the tragic news of the death of Rudolph and Mary Vetsera, and that my husband, who had left that very morning at six o'clock to shoot at Meyerling, had not returned.

In the meantime I had seen one of Stéphanie's ladies-in-waiting, who had told me about the catastrophe. Mastering my emotions, I went to see my sister at the Hofburg.

I found her pale and silent, holding in her hand a letter whose secret must now be given to history.

This letter, which had just been discovered addressed to Stéphanie in Rudolph's private desk, announced his death. He had already resolved on this course when he spoke to me in the Prater. The letter commenced as follows:

"I take leave of life." It was too much for me to read that. The words were blurred by my tears. "Be happy in your own way," he said to his wife. And his last thought was of his child. "Take great care of your daughter. She is most dear to me. I leave you this duty." Unhappy child, who has had no father. I have often pitied her, and I pity her more than ever. She does not know what she has lost.

The Prince of Coburg did not return to the palace until the night of the 31st, after having passed many hours alone with the Emperor. He came at once to my room. His disturbed condition and his wild words showed how distraught he was. I pressed him to give me some of the details of the tragedy. "It is horrible, horrible," he said. "But I cannot, I must not say anything except that they are both dead." He had sworn to the Emperor to keep silent, as had Rudolph's other friends who had gone to shoot at Meyerling. The secret was well kept. The servants who might have spoken have, for very good reasons, disclosed nothing.

When I went to see the Empress, at her request, I found myself in the presence of a marble statue covered with a black veil.

I was so agitated that I could hardly stand.

I passionately kissed the hand she extended, and in a voice broken like that of the mother at Calvary she murmured:

"You weep with me! Yes, I know that you too loved him."

Oh, unfortunate mother! She adored her son. He helped her to bear that life smothered in ashes which his malicious father led beside one who was so noble. After Rudolph had been snatched from her and from his Imperial future, the Empress fled from this Court which henceforth held nothing for her, and she met death alone. It is known by what a sudden and cruel blow she died—the innocent victim of the penalty of her rank.

I saw, I see in the successive dramas of the House of Austria a punishment sent by Heaven. A chain of bloody fatalities which recalls the tragedies of Sophocles or Euripides is not simply a game of chance. The justice of the gods is always that of God. The Court of Vienna was destined to perish horribly. It had betrayed everything; first of all its traditions, for nothing noble remained—even its intrigues were base. It was only a servants' hall for the valets from Berlin. And after Francis Joseph appeared at the famous Eucharistic Congress on the eve of the war, and stood before the altar as Prince of the Faith, he went to finish the dull day at the house of Madame Schratt, and listen to the backstairs gossip of Vienna and the unsavoury reports of the police news!

Rudolph died of sheer disgust!

CHAPTER X

Ferdinand of Coburg and the Court of Sofia

THE glory of the Coburg family reached its zenith at the time of Leopold I and the Prince Consort.

They gave to the world a series of princes who were veritably made to rule. Their direct influence on Belgium, and indirectly on England, created a period of peace and an "Entente," of which the beneficial results are so well known.

Later, when my father continued the brilliant work bequeathed to him by King Leopold, Duke Ernest, Prince Regent of the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, proved himself no less inferior to his cousin at Brussels. In Vienna Prince Auguste, who was so good and with whom unfortunately I had very little to do as a father-in-law, also proved that he was a man of valour.

Of the various Coburgs, those of Vienna who were my husband's brothers represented with him the male descendants left to carry on the name of the race.

I will chiefly mention Ferdinand, the ex-Tsar of Bulgaria. I will not expatiate again on the branch of my family to which he belonged. Its rôle in contemporary history is sufficiently well known.

Ferdinand of Coburg, who is still alive as I write this,

is one of the most curious beings it is possible to imagine. To describe him adequately needs the pen of a Barbey d'Aurevilly or a Balzac.

The clearer my mind becomes as I get older, and the more I try to understand this strange person, the less I comprehend him when I consider him from the ordinary point of view of human psychology.

I have read that woman is an enigma. I believe there are men who are more puzzling enigmas than any woman. One can only wonder whether this man has not created for himself, even more so than William II, an artificial world of his own in which he wished to live. I will presently say *which* world I think appealed to Ferdinand of Coburg. I realize that any princely education which tends to encourage the self-esteem of princes by outward respect and flattery must of necessity accentuate their peculiarities, unless some wholesome influence restrains the promptings of worldly vanity.

A really superior mother was unable to regulate the undisputed mental gifts of Ferdinand. He was born in the autumn of Princess Clémentine's days. He was her Benjamin. She was weak as water where he was concerned. This strength, greater than all strengths—namely, a mother's love—has also its weaknesses. Bad sons abuse these, and, according to the laws of that justice whose workings are often unseen, but whose judgments and punishments are sometimes visible, this son deserves a severe sentence.

He was sixteen years old when I arrived at the Palace

of Coburg. He was slight and elegant; his countenance, lit up by azure eyes, possessed all the beauty of youth allied to something of the Bourbon type. The fire of intelligence and the wish to read the book of life animated him.

He promised to be different in every way from his eldest brother. In his moral character he appeared to possess the good qualities of his second brother, the charming Auguste of Coburg, but they were only useful in helping to form the distinguished bearing which later became natural to him, and which concealed beneath a brilliant appearance a complex and stormy nature.

I was a year older than he. We were the life and soul of the old palace, and at times I was able to forget its dullness and my own troubles. I was the confidante of Ferdinand, and I did not hesitate to make him mine.

Although Ferdinand later displayed hostility towards me, he devoted himself at this period to pleasing his sister-in-law and surrounded her with flowers, attentions and kindness. But it so chanced (and it remained so for a long period) that the eldest and the youngest of the Coburg brothers were at enmity on my account, although this feeling was not outwardly apparent. I must relate these incidents, otherwise it would be difficult to explain the presence of the many enemies who one day overwhelmed me. This enmity proceeded from the same miserable cause which will eternally be at the bottom of so many human dramas—namely, man's jealousy and his lustful appetites thwarted by rules of morality.

Ferdinand of Coburg

Ferdinand of Coburg, idolized by his mother, accepted as a spoiled child by society, initiated early in the most refined pleasures, allowed himself to be transported by his exalted imagination into a world of his own. I have seen, I still see in him a kind of modern necromancer, a *fin de siècle* magician. He was a cabbalist in the same way that M. Peladan was a wise man of the East, and from these adventures always proceeds something which influences destiny.

If at first I only saw him making what appeared to me to be strange gestures, without explaining what these signified, I have now arrived, through my experience of men and things, at understanding why he was then so incomprehensible. He must have been possessed by a power beyond this earth. But he did not believe in God; he believed in the Devil. I am only going to relate that of which I am sure. I am only going to say what I have seen. I do not wish to be more superstitious about certain things, or more troubled in soul than Ferdinand of Coburg. I ask myself to what fantastical sect, to what Satanic brotherhood he belonged in his early days, doubtless with the idea of furthering his ambitions and his extraordinary dreams of the future.

I remember that in our palace at Vienna, Ferdinand would sometimes ask me to play to him when we were alone in the evening. He insisted upon the room being only dimly lit. He would then come near to the piano and listen in silence. At midnight he would stand up solemnly, his features drawn and contracted. He then

looked at the clock and listened for the first of the twelve strokes, and when they were nearing the end he would say:

"Play the march from *Aida*." Then, withdrawing to the middle of the room, he would strike a ceremonial attitude, and repeat incomprehensible words which frightened me.

Ferdinand used to articulate cabbalistic formulas, stretching out his arms with his body bent and his head thrown backwards. Amongst the mysterious phrases a word which sounded like *Koptor*, *Kofte* or *Cophte* was often repeated. One day I asked him to write it down. He traced letters of which I could make nothing, excepting that I seemed to recognize some kind of Greek characters.

After these séances I questioned him, because while they were proceeding I had to be silent and play the march from *Aida*. He invariably answered: "The Devil exists. I call on him and he comes!"

I did not believe this; I mean to say I did not believe in the Devil's actual visit, but I was nevertheless a little frightened, and when my brother-in-law once again began his incantations I would look round to see if there was anything extraordinary in the room. But there was nothing unusual excepting Ferdinand and my own curiosity—and, perhaps, the unrevealed vision of both our futures!

Full of eccentricities, he would bury gloves and ties which he had worn. There was quite a ceremonial

attached to this, at which I was sometimes obliged to assist. Ferdinand dug the hole himself, and repeated strange sentences with a mysterious air.

His mouth would then assume that bitter expression which age has accentuated. Did he indeed juggle with the Prince of Evil, and did he acquire thereby the dominating spirit which became so strong in him?

Did he seek some kind of brain stimulant in these practices, under the action of which, I believe, auto-suggestion becomes dangerous?

I leave it to physicians, to occultists and to casuists to diagnose this case. I am simply a witness, nothing more.

Ferdinand was not yet Prince of Bulgaria. He was only known as a charming lieutenant in the Austrian Chasseurs, who had exchanged from the hussars because he was not in sympathy with the animal from which it is possible to fall, and which is generally supposed to be the most noble conquest of man. I wish to say plainly that Ferdinand of Coburg was a wretched horseman. Who would have thought that this officer of noble descent who had exchanged into an infantry regiment would later possess a throne, and would dream of becoming Emperor of Byzantium?

He designed his crown and arranged his State entry and his coronation, just as did the miserable Emperor William who wished to crown himself *Welt Kaiser* in Nôtre Dame de Paris, and I do not hesitate to say that he dreamed of a ceremony to which the Pope would come,

willing or unwilling, and that all confessions should be reconcilable in his Imperial, august and sacred person.

It is really impossible to-day for a man to be a king according to the ancient formula of absolute power. This kind of wine is too strong; it goes to the head.

Formerly, a prince, even an autocrat, did not see or understand that a small number of faithful persons guarded and restrained him equally as much as they served him. He was usually at war for three-quarters of his reign, and he shared the rough life and privations of a soldier. Now he listens to a thousand voices, a thousand people and the calls of a thousand duties. He no longer fights in person, and there are, besides, long periods of peace. Comfort surrounds and enervates him; wonderful inventions and discoveries have changed everything around him. But although the values and aspects of society and individuals are totally modified, everything is still at his feet.

There is something in losing the knowledge of realities as the unfortunate Tsar Nicolas lost it, as William II lost it, and as Ferdinand of Bulgaria lost it. For Ferdinand grasped power and guarded it like an autocrat, and I am convinced that he will be grateful to me for not enlarging on his policy and the methods which his policy employed.

He had obtained the throne through the help of Princess Clémentine, who was ambitious for her beloved son. What a pity she did not live longer! The more so because, in his passion for authority, Ferdinand tried to

overrule his mother, to whom he would sometimes say, in his domineering manner, words that fortunately owing to her deafness she did not hear. If she could have remained on earth to advise him, he might have led a better life. Whether or no he would have listened to her is another matter.

At the same time, it was she who procured the Crown of Sofia for him, and she maintained him during his perilous début of sovereignty. She gave millions to the prince's establishment and the principality.

The accession of Ferdinand as a prince was first opposed, and afterwards recognized; finally he adopted the title of Tsar. He might have said like Fouquet: "Quo non ascendam?" Everything succeeded with him. Soon he became so self-confident that he was actually seen on horseback. I can truthfully affirm this, as I chose one of his favourite mounts; this especial one came from our stables in Hungary, and was a tall, steady and strong-backed bay mare. Ferdinand was a big powerful man, who needed a stolid-tempered animal that would not shy at guns, cheering, or military music. I tried the mare myself on the Prater in the presence of the prince's envoy. We had really found the very thing for Ferdinand, but I would have been more than sorry to have had it myself as it was altogether too dull, no noise startled it; and it was sent to Sofia, where Ferdinand showed off, mounted on this fine animal, on which he probably dreamt of entering Constantinople. His war against the Turks is not forgotten. He thought himself already at the gates of

Byzantium. . . . But I do not wish to relate what everyone knows. I prefer to show in a new light the secret drama which his diabolical contempt for God and the moral laws of Christian civilization provoked, when he baptized and brought up his sons in the "orthodox" religion whence Bolshevism originated—just as the European war has sprung from Lutherism, and just as the more terrible trials of England will arise from her religious disputes.

Ferdinand of Bulgaria, born in the Catholic faith, first married Marie Louise of Parma, daughter of the Duke of Parma, the faithful servant of the Roman and Apostolic faith. This marriage, celebrated when he was Prince of Bulgaria, had not been agreed upon without the express condition that the children should be baptized and brought up in the religion of their mother and their ancestors. This constituted a formal article of the contract. Ferdinand solemnly consented to it. But when he thought that the support of Russia might be useful to him in his plans regarding Constantinople, he did not hesitate to break his vows; he gave his two sons to Russian schism. Marie Louise of Parma, mother of the souls of her children, betrayed, repulsed and broken in her belief in her husband, immediately fled from the Konak of Sofia, and came to Vienna to hide her sorrow and her fear in the sympathetic arms of her mother-in-law, who was equally tortured by the blasphemy of her son.

People who have some ideas on the question of con-

science, especially when it touches religious convictions, will easily understand the intensity of this drama.

I was then at the Coburg Palace. I saw the Princess of Bulgaria arrive there after having fled from the palace, where, in the opinion of this pious mother, her innocent children had lost their hope of salvation. It was no doubt much to endure. God is far greater than we imagine Him to be. Our interpretations of His justice, although inspired by revelation, will always underestimate His compassion, for we have not the words to express, still less to explain, the survival of souls.

The poor princess was naturally extremely unhappy. I well remember her agonized pale face, her indignation and her desire to annul her marriage at the Court of Rome.

Fearing that Ferdinand would come and take her back to Sofia by force, she insisted upon remaining near Princess Clémentine, who had a camp bed put in a little room adjoining her own. The Princess of Bulgaria did not feel safe except in this refuge.

Reasons of State and the impossibility of living without seeing her children, who were retained as prisoners of their father's throne, proved after all stronger than the princess's rebellion and despair. Some months later she consented to return to Sofia.

The House of Parma was, like herself, astounded. The Holy See had excommunicated Ferdinand. This malediction threw the entire family of Parma into mourning; they had been so trustful and so proud of

Ferdinand's love, in which they had shown their confidence by giving him one of their daughters.

I next saw the poor Princess of Bulgaria at Sofia. She had heroically returned to her conjugal duties; she had just recovered from her confinement.

Who knows—who will ever know—what actually passed in her mind? Consumed by inward griefs, she perhaps died as a result. She was one of those sensitive souls who actually die of a broken heart.

I have often thought of her. She was a martyr to the love of her children. One visit to Sofia in 1898 remains indelibly impressed in my mind.

My husband accompanied me, but there was always something indefinable and indefinite between himself and his brother, probably the subconscious enmity which I have previously mentioned. We could not, however, have been welcomed more warmly. The life of the Sovereign was wonderfully well organized in this country which was still primitive. Nothing was wanting at the palace. There East and West were happily united.

Ferdinand gave me as a personal guard an honest brigand of sorts, picturesquely garbed after an Oriental fashion. From the time that this man was ordered to watch over me and only to obey my orders, he took up his stand before my door, and day and night he never moved therefrom. My husband himself could not have come in without my permission. I have never understood how this ferocious sentinel managed to be always on the spot.

My brother-in-law showed me a most delicate and

refined attention. He constituted me the queen of these days of festivity. I was overwhelmed by the homage of his entourage. Each meal was a decorative and culinary marvel. Sybarites would have appreciated the cuisine at the Palace of Sofia.

I have always appreciated meals which are meals. It costs no more to eat a good dinner than to eat a bad one; it is a weakness of the body and mind, a crime against the Creator, to disdain food when it is prepared with care. If we have been given the gift of taste, and if good things exist on earth, they are equally for one as for another. Ferdinand at any rate held this epicurean belief.

Every night after supper there was a dance at the palace. The Bulgarian officers were most enterprising dancers. Educated at Vienna or Paris, they understood the art of conversation. They were distinguished by an instinctive air of nobility, as are all the sons of a virile and essentially agricultural race with a wholesome and wide outlook.

During the day the prince did the honours of his capital and his kingdom. We recalled the memories of the Coburg Palace, and our former excursions and parties. We returned in spirit to that Forest of Elenthal so dear to our youth. We drove, accompanied by an escort which I have never ceased to admire. I am unaware whether the Bulgarian roads have improved, but at the time of which I write they were few, and they were maintained at the expense of Providence. A short distance from the capital they became tracks. But the

escort followed without flinching, utterly indifferent to obstacles of every description which encumbered an already too narrow road. I have rarely seen the equal of either man or beast in crossing ridges, walls and ditches. It was witchcraft on horseback.

Ferdinand was superbly indifferent to everything unconnected with his sister-in-law. I gazed at him, and I thought of the devil-worship of our youth. He was always strange. I saw now, as I had seen long ago, the amulet in his buttonhole, disguised as a decoration, a button fashioned in the shape of a yellow marguerite beautifully executed in metal of the same shade as that of the heart of the flower. Each time I asked him about this "gri-gri" he assumed a serious manner, and gave me to understand that it was something which he could not discuss.

He had earnestly begged us to spend a short time with him. Had he the same idea which he had once explained to me openly at dinner, and which he emphasized privately in another way? I cannot believe it.

I think that, carried away by his thoughts, he was no longer master of himself. I do not know whether I was ever mad, as his elder brother so much wished to believe, but I am absolutely sure that Ferdinand of Coburg was not always in possession of his senses.

Yes, this spiritual scholar, this lover of art, this lover of flowers, this delightful friend of the birds in his aviary to whom he told nursery tales and charmed like a

professional bird-charmer, this accomplished man of the world, this son of Princess Clémentine, and this grandson of Queen Marie often assumed a kind of demoniacal personality and gave himself up to the evil delights of sorcery.

At one dinner, which I remember as if it were yesterday, he said in low tones so that my husband could not hear (my husband being opposite to me in the seat of the princess, who was absent owing to indisposition):

"You see everything here. Ah, well! All is my kingdom; I lay it, myself included, at your feet."

I could only welcome this romantic declaration as fantastic gallantry rather than a literal statement. I tried to reply as if I treated the remark as a joke. But apart from his expression, which gave the lie to the level tone of his voice, I had more than one reason to distrust Ferdinand, now that his imagination was mastered by desire.

In fact, the same evening he came to me, and, taking me away from the dancers, led me to another room where a French window was open to the Oriental night and the stillness of the little park, and inquired if I had understood what he had said.

His tone was harsh and his look stern. There was something imperious and fascinating about him. I was much disturbed. He insisted brusquely:

"It is the last time that I shall offer what I have offered. Do you understand?"

My eyes wandered to the salon. I saw beside me the Prince of Bulgaria so different from his brother, still

young, handsome and full of power. But the image of Princess Marie Louise passed before my eyes, and also the vision of the Queen. . . . I shook my head, and murmured a frightened " No."

I must have looked as pale as wax. Ferdinand's countenance changed. His features took on a sinister expression; he, too, turned pale, and in a hoarse voice he threatened me, saying sneeringly:

" Take care. You will repent this. By ' Kophte ' (?)."

He added those incomprehensible words which he always used when he asked me to play the march from *Aida* in the darkened salon at midnight.

That evening I felt something dangerous was in store for me. It was so; from that moment Ferdinand of Coburg joined his brother in his enmity towards me. And his enmity was no small matter.

I am quite aware that these facts will appear incredible to most people. They seem more like an old romance by Anne Radcliffe! But everything, both in the public and private life of Ferdinand of Coburg, *was* incredible. I do not wish to refer to the judgment already meted out to him by history. My desire is not to gloat over his downfall, but to show in what inconceivable surroundings I lived. I was a member of a family where everything was perfect and at the same time execrable. Unfortunately I was not then in a position to love good and shun evil. It took me twenty years to escape.

Ferdinand of Coburg has commenced his punishment on earth. Knowing him as I do, I am certain that he

suffers intensely, even though he may sometimes receive consolation from the Devil!

I think he believes himself a superman. That fool Nietzsche—in reviving a theory as old as the hills, when supermen called themselves cavaliers, warriors, heroes and demi-gods—has turned a considerable number of heads in German countries. He did them the more harm in that their superhumanity, infested by the morbid materialism of the century, became separated from the ideal which once animated these mighty persons, and elevated them to honour instead of luring them to crime. It is certain that despicable motives and methods can only end in a terrible material and moral defeat. Ferdinand of Coburg, who has been ambitious from his youth upwards, was a student of Nietzsche at the time when his theories achieved notoriety. So Nietzsche obtained as his disciple a being who is now one of the most notable victims of Zarathustra.

CHAPTER XI

William II and the Court of Berlin—The Emperor of Illusion

I WISH to speak of William II as of one dead. He does not belong to this world; he belongs to another.

I must be excused if I am sparing of anecdotes. It would be painful to me to recall to life and movement one who has passed. My desire is to limit myself to explaining effects of which I know the cause.

It was puerile to wish under high-sounding vain words such a petty thing as the arrest and trial of a Government sunk in shame.

Society cannot recognize any Divine law in crimes against civilization, since they place man below the level of the beast.

William II fell from the throne and was arrested by a more powerful hand than that of earthly justice. He has known the severest prison of all—exile; the most frightful regime—fear; the most terrible sentence—that of conscience. Who will know the secret of the nights of this fugitive traitor to his people whom he fed with deceptions and lies, and whom he has led to ruin, civil war and dishonour? For not only did he dishonour himself, but he dishonoured Germany in dishonouring her arms.

Where is the honest German who has recovered from

the intoxication of war who can hear the name of Louvain, of the *Lusitania*, of poison gas and other horrors without shuddering? But the responsibility of all these crimes must rest on William II.

The passing of centuries will be necessary to wipe out the stain of his murderous folly. This constitutes the shadow over the unfortunate Empire which makes it appear monstrous to the nations of the Entente.

But I wish to say at once, because I am certain of it, Germany is what Imperial Prussia has made her, and would again make of her.

The victim of her confidence and candour, she accepted as gospel all that her Sovereign, the heir of victorious ancestors, declared, professed and taught her.

It is harder to inherit a kingdom than people think, and I say this without irony. William II was not human like his grandfather, who cried out when he saw the sacrifice of the cuirassiers of Reisdroffen : " Ah, my brave men ! " William II possessed nothing of his father, who earned the name of Frederick the Noble, and who died of two maladies, that of his throat and that of his feverish impatience to reign.

William II was charming as a boy. As a child he was an amiable playfellow. We have plundered the strawberry beds of Laeken together—a sacrilege which was pardoned solely on his account.

I have followed his career as far as it was possible. I believed him to be great. I have heard much of his power not only from his own people, but from all people.

He had a wonderful part to play. He did not know how to play it; he could not; he lacked the means to do so, and perhaps, first of all, a clever and good wife. He had no depth of soul. A different wife might perhaps have supplied him with this quality.

Francis Joseph at the beginning of his active career as an Emperor was almost brilliant; he certainly appeared distinguished. Thirty years after, his face assumed an expression of vulgarity of which his first portraits gave no forecast, although at a distance he still gave the impression of being "somebody." But the high *morale* of the Empress was somewhat reflected in him.

Less blessed in a wife, the longer William II has lived the worse his looks, his speech and his bearing have become. Two men—the late King Edward VII and my father, the King of the Belgians—took his exact measure and augured nothing good for his future.

The intimate opinion of him expressed by my father has often recurred to me, but this would entail a separate chapter and it would lead us far. I will confine myself to stating that the King had always foreseen that Germany, intoxicated with the warlike perorations of William II, who was a preacher of the old Prussian regime, would end by throwing herself upon Belgium, upon France and upon the whole world.

The defences of the Meuse were a convincing indication of the King's forethought. But we shall never know all that the King said, what he did, and what he desired to do in this matter.

Unfortunately certain parties and certain influential men in Belgium wrongly countered his plans instead of acting upon them. The country has suffered cruelly for this mistake.

By what means did William II arrive at those false conclusions which swept away the thrones of Central Europe and which have caused so many calamities? It was not, as has been thought by the Entente, the result of a fatal environment created alike by the ambitions of Germany and her barbaric instincts. The German Emperor wielded immense power. He was in truth an absolute monarch, and in consequence the Reichstag, the Bundesrath, or the various State Parliaments never interfered with him. The Emperor's Cabinet ruled the army, which in its turn ruled the nation. Thus everything was centred in the person of the Emperor, this magnificent fruit of Prussian discipline and force.

But in this fruit which made such an impression when seen on its wall, there was a hidden worm. William II was a liar; he lied to others and to himself without knowing that he was a liar. He lived continually in a world of fiction. In short, he was an actor.

But he was the worst of actors; he was the amateur, the man of the world who plays comedy—and drama—who is so taken up with his own small talent that he becomes more of an actor than an actor, and in consequence is always acting in everything and everywhere.

This passion for the theatre is alike William II's excuse and his condemnation. It is his excuse because he entered so well into the "skin" of the various characters which he played, that in each of them he was sincere. It is his condemnation, because a king and an emperor should be a Reality, a Will, a Wisdom; but he was none of these.

Personally he was hollow and sonorous. He did not know much. He did not at close quarters, like Francis Joseph, give one the impression of being the concièrge at an embassy, but he always gave one the impression that is best illustrated by a saying which I remember having seen in the *Figaro:* "Have you seen me in the part of Charlemagne, or as a Lutheran bishop?"—(for he was *summus episcopus*)—"or as an admiral, or as the leader of an orchestra?" His many talents have been recounted. They may all be reduced to one—the art of self-deception in order to deceive others. Under this veneer of self-deception there existed an empty soul, without a standard of honour, without poise, at the mercy of any kind of flattery, impressions, or circumstances. No sooner did he hear a speech than he gave his opinion, and assumed an attitude according to the rôle of the character to be represented.

He may be described as the best son in the world, for he was not wicked; he was worse—he was weak. It was Chamfort, if my memory serve me rightly, who wrote: "The weak are the advance guard of the army of the wicked." William II was the scout of the advance

guard; his Staff was the army. He who was so afraid of thunder usurped the place of Jupiter, the Thunderer, but this amateur soldier was far too nervous to endure even the noise of battle. When his officers for their own advancement persuaded him that he possessed military and naval talent, he dreamt of the rôle of "Welt Kaiser," and prepared for the conquest of the earth.

Caught in their own trap, his faithful adherents were intoxicated by the intoxication which they had provoked. The Emperor's Cabinet was the theatre of a continuous orgy of gigantic schemes. At Vienna men's imaginations were inflamed. The Berlin-Bagdad Railway of Central Europe revived the earlier Near-East scheme. And a whole camarilla interested in the advantages to be derived from these splendid enterprises praised them extravagantly.

If in 1914 the Emperor Francis Joseph had possessed any glimmer of reason and good sense, he would have taken notice of the formidable uncertainties of the Berlin problems, and maintained peace while refusing to die at the cries of the victims of a war.

Left to himself, William II let loose the worst and most barbarous powers on the nations who were dragged into the horrors of war.

I have said that he lacked depth. He was in reality inconsistent. Although playing a thousand parts, he had no personality.

A man is only "someone" by reason of his personality. Many fools and dishonest men reach their

goals in life through intrigue, chance, favouritism and human folly. But they are none the less foolish and dishonest for all that, and this is why the world is so evil.

William II assumed chivalrous airs, but he still remained coarse in his outlook. This was often apparent in his jokes with the officers of the Guards. He had no tact or judgment. His lack of tact was due to his bad Prussian education; to his student days at Bonn, which were given up to drinking bouts; and as a young man, to his taste for frequenting the Berlin casinos. As for his lack of judgment, this was the result of inherent vanity, which everything tended to develop to his own injury and that of Germany. The vain man is the being who is deceived by everyone, because he has begun by deceiving himself. And he is usually a hopeless idiot.

William II once said to me, under the impression that he was paying me a compliment: " You would make a fine Prussian grenadier." The compliment seemed to me " Pomeranian."

If William II had possessed tact and judgment he would have known how to adopt a policy other than threats and violence, and a diplomacy utterly opposed to the trickery with which Germany was so affected during his reign.

Incapable of judging the times in which he lived, weighed down by Prussian tradition, and full of zeal as titular chief of the House of Prussia, descended from a Suabian family which had emigrated to Brandenburg, he persuaded the upper classes of Germany that he had con-

solidated his prestige. The Middle Ages have had a disastrous effect on him and, through him, on all Germany.

In addition to battlemented railway stations and post offices fortified by machiolated galleries, the influence of mediævalism led the Emperor-King and his people back to the old hates, the old struggles and the old ideas, just as if the world had not changed with the passing of centuries. The result was that science, inventions, and discoveries were first made to serve the industry of war, the continuation of conquests, the mailed fist, and all the follies which soldiers, writers and military journalists applied themselves to serve, finding therein their daily bread.

However, those nations brought into closer contact by means of intercommunication and by exchange of ideas have commenced to find solutions of difficulties in pacific ways—solutions which until now have only been dragged from the path of war. By this I mean the preservation and the development of the human species, its better distribution on the earth, and its rights to greater happiness and justice.

William II lacked depth (I again mention the fact) because he lacked moral strength. Not that he was immoral. Without being a saint, he admirably fulfilled the rôle of husband and father. He was in everything a zealous amateur. Yet he lacked moral strength because his Lutheran attitude, which allowed him to play the part of a Protestant preacher, was not a religious rôle. His

sermons as Head of the Church did not teach him to be humble, charitable and just before God.

Contrary to what is generally believed, especially if the religious problem has not been studied, neither Lutheranism nor Calvinism is a religion. The beautiful souls one meets who have held, and who hold these religious beliefs would be beautiful no matter what belief they held, or even in the absence of any belief. They possess an innate beauty which touches the Divine. But a phase of religious belief cannot be a religion. Schisms are the accidents of the life of the Church. A tear in a costume is not a costume—on the contrary! Lutheranism was not originally a form of worship; it was a revolt, and this species of revolt will always make more rebels than believers. A revolt against Rome—*Los von Rome!* Impious cry! This is not only a case of "Deliver us from Rome," it is also a case of "Deliver us from the Christian religion, from the unity of the Catholic Church, otherwise called the Universal Church, which is our only chance of peace on earth." It is a denial of Latinity and of Hellenism; it is the retrogression of Central Europe to the Scandinavian Valhalla; it is not a world which expands, it is a world which confines. It does not represent the free harmony of the actions and the thoughts of men; it is the enforced uniformity of the parade step, and the silence on parade in the ranks of the Prussian Guard.

If William II, who is responsible for the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, the burning of Louvain, the massacres of Dinant and so many other atrocities, were

not, so far as I am concerned, dead, and if I were to see him again, I would say to him:

"You miserable man! Have you read Goethe? Can you imagine what he who wrote 'Man is only great according to the Heaven which is within himself' would think of you? You do not possess Heaven. You have driven away God with the Luther of hate and negation which was your God; you are a mere nullity."

CHAPTER XII

The Holsteins

I FIRST knew Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein shortly after her marriage with Prince William of Prussia. I saw her later as German Empress at the Court of Berlin.

It was not easy to find favour in her sight; not that she was a malicious woman, but her narrowness of mind and her pretensions to the perfections of German virtues made her no friendly judge of women.

A pessimist and a martinet, she was wholly given up to her domestic duties and her worship of the God of Luther, whom she served with a zeal inimical to other gods, and with such piety that she edified Germany. But she had no conception of the immense pity and the infinite splendour of the true God. Always a sentimental country, Germany thoroughly admired this wife and mother, her husband and their children, who, when seen at a distance, really constituted a magnificent family.

But let us judge the tree by its fruits. There were in this Royal ménage no intimate dramas, no moral conflicts; everything seemed to proceed decently and in order. But none of the children born of the union of William II and Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein has deserved any

consideration at the hands of men. And in pity for them I will say no more.

I was familiar with the old Court of Berlin, that of William I. I have often seen the old and infirm Empress Augusta, who always appeared to be very tightly corseted, installed on a sofa in the Imperial Salon close to a curtain which was drawn aside, and the Court circle then formed round her. She was invariably kind to me, and spoke to me in excellent French. The Emperor, William I, wandered simply and affably from one person to another.

The Crown Prince Frederick gave me the impression of being good, well read, noble and spiritual, and his wife, the daughter of Queen Victoria, was attractive owing to her candid and pleasant demeanour and her remarkable intelligence.

Count von Bismarck and Marshal von Moltke were the two lions of this unceremonial Court. Being young, I examined both curiously. Count Bismarck was noisy; he spoke loudly, and often indulged in a certain coarse gaiety. Marshal von Moltke said nothing; he seemed embarrassed with it all. But his piercing eyes made up for his lack of words, and for my part I had no desire to offend this sphinx-like person.

With the accession of William II, the patriarchal Court of William I and the Anglo-German but ephemeral Court of Frederick the Noble gave place to a Court of another kind. The ceremonial of official presentations was increased and became more frequent. The new

Emperor wished to surround himself with warlike pomp, but the presence of Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein always reduced the most solemn ceremonies of the last Court of Berlin to commonplace grandeur. At this period the Empress had much trouble to gown herself and to dress her hair with taste. Her presence on the throne sufficed to transform it into a bourgeois sofa. Later, her taste in chiffons improved.

When William II came to Vienna he was received with the honours due to his rank. I took especial pains with my toilette in order to do him honour.

Accustomed as I was to his ponderous sallies, I did not expect to hear him say to me in French, which he spoke excellently, even in its boldest gallicisms: "Do you get the style of your coiffure and your gowns in Paris?"

"Sometimes in Paris, but generally in Vienna," I answered. "I represent the fashion, and I design my own dresses."

"You ought to choose Augusta's hats and help her with her gowns. The poor dear always looks shabby."

So this is the reason why the German Empress patronized the same shops which I patronized, and bought dresses which I helped design. The question of hats bristled with difficulties, because she has one of those big heads which are so hard to suit. But I succeeded, it appears, in fulfilling the wish of her husband by rendering this small service to his wife. He thanked me

amiably, although he was one of those who never forgive us for benefits received.

The Holsteins, from whom the Empress was descended, had, as one knows, lost their Duchy, which was in former times Danish, and which had fallen into the hands of the Prussians. As a wife for the prince who one day would be William II, Count von Bismarck suggested Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein, who possessed an equable temperament, and whom he judged would balance the flights of fancy peculiar to a young and ardent husband.

This marriage had the merit of uniting the Holsteins to the House of Berlin by other means than by the sword. It regularized, in the eyes of Europe, the somewhat brusque method by which Prussia had annexed the Duchy. The political value of this marriage was well worth the dowry which Augusta certainly lacked.

The tall and fair future Empress was neither pretty nor ugly, but pretty rather than ugly. Her piety was well advertised, but there are pieties which had better be dispensed with if they spring from a false foundation. This was the case as regards the religious zeal of Augusta of Holstein, who when she became Empress began to regard her husband as the Head of the Protestant Church—a man who, lacking eclecticism, talked nonsense about the Roman Church, the Christian religion and Latinity. But he should have been restrained and made to observe the outcome of his Lutheran ramblings,

which were mixed with invocations to Wotan and the god Thor.

Another point no less grave was that the Holsteins, who were ruined or nearly so, were obliged to try and replenish their fortunes. Augusta was forced to think of this, and primarily to establish her brother Gunther, who led the life of a German officer of a noble family without having the means to do so. William II arranged matters from time to time, but he did not display much enthusiasm. In no case does money play a greater part than with people who are attached to a Court. Without money nothing is of value, because this class of people are only measured by the money which they spend.

This was not the case with Gunther of Schleswig-Holstein. He possessed intelligence and culture. It has also been said that he was well posted in business matters. He has taken the chair at congresses in the capacity of a man of knowledge, and if during the war he did not particularly distinguish himself as a soldier, he has nevertheless shone as a financier. As a young officer these practical qualities were not apparent. It was necessary for him to make a good marriage. He failed in many attempts at matrimony. Presentable enough as a young man, he did not improve with age. When I saw him at various shooting parties in Thuringia, at the beginning of his career at Court, he was not bad-looking. When Gunther of Schleswig-Holstein asked for my daughter Dora in marriage, and we had given our

consent, he asked me to fix the date. I could not help saying:

"What! . . . Do you seriously contemplate leading my daughter to the altar without having that dreadful nose of yours attended to?"

As a matter of fact he had a red nose of a many-sided, uncertain shape. Everyone is not like the Prince of Condé or Cyrano. A misshapen nose is certainly inconvenient.

His sister pressed for his marriage with my daughter. The same idea had struck her at Berlin as that which twenty years earlier had brought the Prince of Coburg to Brussels. The immense fortune of the King of the Belgians was by now undisputed. Calculations were made as to his income, and people talked of a thousand million francs to be divided one day between three heiresses. This aroused ardent speculative ideas, because even in those days one thousand million francs counted as something.

The Duke of Holstein, having improved the appearance of his nose, again spoke of his marriage with my daughter.

Dora was still young. At this time my husband and I had reached the tragic point of an almost definite rupture. I hoped that it would take place quietly. It was not I who let loose all the scandals. It so happened that we had decided to stay away from Vienna for a year. We therefore left for the Riviera. Gunther of Holstein went with us. Thence we went to Paris, where I brought

my household. This was looked upon as a crime. People seemed to forget that my husband formed part of my household.

His company, rare as it was, was only irksome to me, and doubtless mine was no more agreeable to him. When difficulties arose between us I found constant consolation in the society of my daughter. Her mother was everything to her; my child was everything to me. At least Dora was mine. Her brother had long left me, so I kept my hold on her. I protected her; I made as much of her as I could. But having now reached the point of the story of my daughter's marriage with a relation of the Hohenzollerns, and the influence which the Court of Berlin was destined to have on Dora's future and on my own, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of portraying in these pages the ideal man of my devotion, who, having secured my moral safety, also gave me a new lease of life.

I will not deny it. According to the ordinary laws of the world, his presence at that time on the Riviera and afterwards in Paris offended all the traditions of ordinary respectable conventions.

Certain situations can only be judged in a manner suitable to them. If it is true that owing to my entreaties —the entreaties of a desperate woman who found herself isolated, and at the mercy of the man who was still her husband—the Count of Geza Mattachich was at the Côte-d'Azur at the same time as myself, and mixed with my entourage on the footing of a man of honour (as is the

custom in the households of princesses), then I beg my readers to agree that my future son-in-law had no fault to find. This statement I think suffices.

Gunther of Holstein showed the count both respect and friendship, and further to prove this he asked him to act as his second in an affair of honour which he was able to arrange. But what was still more unfortunate, Dora, who had apparently some kind of instinct as to the troublesome times in store for her at Berlin, returned her ring to her fiancé and released him from his engagement.

Gunther of Holstein begged Count Mattachich to intercede with me to prevent the rupture, and I consented.

For this kindness I was destined to be basely repaid.

I did not wish to be separated from my daughter before her marriage, and especially to leave her in Vienna at the Coburg Palace. When we were leaving for the Riviera, I had told the assembled servants with tears in my eyes that I should never return there again, and the prince had listened without saying a word to contradict my assertion. I was afraid of the influence of Vienna, where my unfortunate son finally perished, and where owing to his misconduct he was destined to end his days in a horrible manner. A fearful punishment for his faults, and the moral parricide which he committed in disowning his mother. No! at all costs Dora must remain with me.

However, the Duke of Holstein insisted that Dora ought to be introduced to his family and to the Hohenzollerns. He gave me his word of honour to bring her

back if I would allow her to go to Berlin for a few days accompanied by her governess. I made this soldier of Berlin swear this, but "vanquished is he who pushes the wheel of the conqueror's chariot," and I let her go.

She did not return. She was kept far away from me. This was the open avowal of the plot of which the melancholy vicissitudes were about to be precipitated.

I only learnt of the marriage of my daughter to Gunther of Schleswig-Holstein from the newspapers, when I was incarcerated in the Doebling Asylum at Vienna. I had just been taken there.

This plot—have I mentioned it?—was one of the vilest of plots—it was a plot which concerned money.

I was not mad, but my enemies thought that I should most certainly become mad in the midst of lunatics. Madness is contagious. My destruction had been determined. For as insane, or passing as such, I should be incapable of managing my own affairs. I should possess no civil rights, and my representatives could do as they pleased with my property. The King was old, and doubtless it would not be long before he "passed over." It was then certain that each of his children would inherit about three thousand millions. Was I to be allowed to inherit such a fortune, which I was sure to surrender into inimical hands, and which would then be squandered?

It is not to be wondered that my son, my daughter's husband, perhaps even my daughter herself, who was then a prisoner where William II and his wife ruled, agreed with the wishes of the Prince of Coburg, who was anxious

Photo: E. Bieber

DUKE GUNTHER OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

to revenge himself for the bitter feelings which he had inspired in my heart.

Besides, his vengeance would not fall on me alone. It would overtake and crush the count, whom he hated for his presumed influence over me. And this influence, how could they possibly understand it? People see only what they want to see. It is beyond their miserable comprehension to understand superior beings with lofty souls and aspirations, and they describe as infamy what in reality is sacrifice.

I will pass rapidly over the shame and the sorrow, and I will only relate as much as is necessary to make known to the world the high and pure character of the count, who, a Bayard without fear and without reproach, dauntlessly confronted a military tribunal.

I will confine myself to stating that in the unprecedented drama of incessant persecutions which I was forced to endure from the year 1897 until the victory of the Entente, the Imperial Houses of Berlin and Vienna were the prop and support of the different attacks, pressure, outrages, defamations and calumnies which would assuredly have overwhelmed me if public opinion had not instinctively revolted thereat.

And the public knew nothing of the rights and wrongs of the case.

Strengthened by public sympathy, I have been able to resist oppression. Justice is slow but sure.

The principal Austrian mental specialists refused to certify me as insane, and an asylum in Germany was

found where I was destined to serve a life sentence. I then said to William II:

"As an accomplice of this crime, you will be eventually punished."

I reflected at this time that the man who was a party to the crime of thrusting a sane being into the abyss of madness was capable of other abominations. I did not believe that God would permit him to go unpunished.

He has been punished.

The same blow has struck the companion of his life, the wife who was so intolerant of the faults of others, so uncompromising from the height of her unchristian-like virtue. As the enemy of her neighbour, her influence would have been enough to bring about the war, since the worst of warlike tendencies is the spirit of intolerance.

It is not sufficiently well known, but it is a fact, that the awful conflict of 1914-1918 was simply the result of the pitiless and inhuman hate of Lutheran Prussia, which was devoured by the wish to dominate, to govern and to oppress.

Disbelief caused the war. Belief only will bring about lasting peace.

Belgium and France must understand that, although Prussia held and enriched Germany, Germany never liked Prussia.

Germany can only be won by confidence and by affection.

The Catholic section, who are no less generous than the Socialists, who although the greater part are sincere,

are indifferent to Divine will, should show an example of reconciliation. The bishops would then have a great rôle to perform. Religious conferences and pilgrimages might afford occasions of meeting on a better footing, and before I die I should like to see Germans, Belgians and French united in the presence of the God of Love, in the same faith and in the same hope, and through the Love of His Law they would then exchange the kiss of peace.

CHAPTER XIII

The Courts of Munich and Old Germany

EACH time I have stayed at the Court of Vienna I have regretted that I did not know Louis II personally. When I first saw him he had already taken refuge in his dreams and his dreamlike castles.

Like Rudolph, he had been seized with a great mistrust, not of humanity, but of those who directed human affairs. He did not, like Rudolph, find a way of escape in suicide. Louis II created for himself a paradise of art and beauty, where he endeavoured to lose himself, away from his people, whom he loved, and by whom he was loved in return.

I once caught sight of him in the park at Munich sitting alone in his state carriage, escorted by rather theatrical outriders. Behind the bevelled plate-glass windows framed in gold, he sat imposing and motionless.

He was an astonishing apparition, one which the crowd saluted without his seeming to take any notice.

After his extravagances the Court, forced to economize, easily adopted a more or less bourgeois existence.

I rejoiced to see the patriarchal customs of the Regent, Prince Luitpold. I had not then much experience of politics, and only saw the surface of things. The impatient insubordination of Bavaria to Prussia, from which

a more intelligent and less divided Europe might have derived so much advantage, escaped me. I only saw in the Regent a character out of one of Topfer's stories.

He devoted the greater part of his time, even in his old age, to physical exercises. Shooting and swimming were his favourite pastimes. He bathed every day all the year round in one of the large ponds on his estate in Nymphenburg. And when he was not shooting he was walking. His outward appearance gave no indication of his rank. I met him one autumn day in Vienna in one of the little streets off the Prater behind the Lusthaus; he was in his shirt sleeves; his coat and top hat were hanging on the point of the walking-stick which he carried over his shoulder. He seemed happier than a king.

His inseparable companion, a poodle no less shaggy and hairy than his master, accompanied him. They looked exactly like one another. At a distance a near-sighted person might easily have mistaken the dog for the Regent and the Regent for the dog.

Louis III, his son and successor, inherited his father's simple tastes, which he believed he could simplify still more. But excess in anything is a mistake. His abuse of simplicity was practically his only way of making a mark in contemporaneous history. History will not preserve the memory of this mediocre King of Bavaria, but it will remember his unfashionable clothes, his concertina trousers, his square boots with rubber heels and his wrinkled socks, by which he wished to demonstrate his democratic tastes. He would have done better to have

recollected that the duty of a king is to raise the man in the street to the level of the throne, and not to let the king descend to the level of the man in the street.

He was not popular, owing to his bad taste. In vain he paraded his love of beer, coarse jokes, sausages and skittles. The Bavarians remembered Louis II as a good king, and at the same time as a grandly spectacular king.

People are flattered when a king who is a king unbends to them, but if he looks like a carter they experience no pride in seeing him drive the chariot of State as if it were a cart.

The Court of Bavaria, which had slightly retrieved its former position before 1914, fell between Scylla and Charybdis when the Crown Prince of Bavaria and the Man of Berlin played with the thunderbolts of war. The Wittelsbachs vanished like smoke in the defeat of Prussian ambitions.

They might still have been at Munich if they had furthered legitimate Bavarian ambitions, and judged them from the exclusive point of view of the political and religious needs of their country.

It must be recollected, however, that the German thrones were threatened. Neither the rigid discipline of Berlin, the go-as-you-please rule of Munich, nor the mixed systems which existed between these two extremes could have kept up the anachronism of worn-out forms which the people instinctively rejected by paying more attention year by year to Socialism and Republicanism.

The German kings have vanished. It is not impos-

sible that they may return; if not the same, others, perhaps better qualified to rule. Nations are restricted in their choice as to the methods of government. Monarchy is the form which pleases them, or rather which they tolerate, more often than any other. Monarchy originates from the family principle, which is an eternal principle. The true king is a father. Monarchy may be reborn in Germany and elsewhere, but its powers will be modified and restricted by the times. As it existed in Germany it has been condemned to extinction by reason of its archaism.

The Church alone has the privilege of not becoming obsolete, by the constant return of mankind to an immutable doctrine. Monarchies become obsolete owing to men of the same blood, the same name and the same race who aspire to exist uninfluenced by the constant changes of the conditions of life. When they fall exhausted, then comes the time of the Republic. But because the family principle is the foundation of social existence, and because a Republic favours the individual rather than the family, the Republic in its turn disappears and Monarchy reappears. Such is the way of the world.

Germany would be the first to admit this if she possessed any philosophical sense whatever. It is a popular legend that Germany possesses the philosophical spirit, and nothing is more invincible than a legend. But, as a matter of fact, there is no nation on earth at once more metaphysical and less philosophical than the German nation. Metaphysics alone help her people to dream and to accept these dreams for realities. In no

way does it lead them to a condition of wise clear-sightedness.

The German nation has fallen into the pit dug for it by Imperial Prussia. Every Court, important or otherwise, was convinced that Berlin and the Hohenzollerns would be masters of the hour.

Certain showy Monarchies, feeling the pressure of a rather frock-coated Socialism, have tried to accommodate themselves to Social Democracy as Social Democracy adapts itself to them.

Nevertheless, one saw some maintaining their traditional ceremonial undisturbed.

Such a Monarchy was the little Court of Thurn and Taxis at Regensburg, the most picturesque and most amusing Court which I have known.

I have often played skittles at Regensburg; but what a spectacle we presented! We played skittles wearing our tiaras and our long-trained gowns. There was etiquette in handling and bowling a large ball. More than one tiara became insecure, and more than one player groaned in her jewels, silks and embroideries, not to mention her corsets. Luckily clothes were then capable of more resistance. If this had occurred nowadays, when women dress in transparencies which are as scanty as possible, what would not one have seen?

It must not be thought that this was a chance game of skittles which I played dressed in full Court toilette. It was the fashion. You did everything at Regensburg in a procession, preceded by a Master of the Ceremonies. And

because and for all that, as Victor Hugo says somewhere, it was very droll.

Life at Regensburg was agreeable. The prince and princess entertained magnificently. The palace lent itself admirably to entertaining, as it was a superb residence, royally furnished and surrounded by gardens which were tended with love. The cooking equalled that of the cuisine dear to the heart of Ferdinand of Bulgaria. The charming part about it was that the antiquated ceremonial was so well ordered that certain exaggerations were quickly forgotten in the beauty of rhythm and arrangement, which recalled the dignity of bygone days.

We went to the races in splendid state barouches, preceded by equally well turned out outriders. The Count of Stanfferberg, Master of the Horse, an old Austrian officer, rode at the side of the prince's carriage, and the gentlemen-in-waiting were so attentive that, had there been no step to the carriage, every one of them would have supplied the place with their persons.

If we went to the theatre we went in full dress, preceded by torch-bearers to the princely box.

An etiquette of this description compelled one to maintain the dignity of one's station. But the prince and his wife liked this ceremonial; they only lived to prolong the pomp of past centuries.

It had been said that Princess Marguerite of Thurn and Taxis somewhat resembled Marie Antoinette. The prince, who believed in the said resemblance, wished to give his wife a set of diamonds which had once

belonged to the unfortunate Queen of France. He bought them and the princess wore them. I was afraid that there might be some fatality in this, but there were no superstitions at the Court of Thurn and Taxis. The future was seen through rose-coloured glasses, and in order to make the appearance of the princess suit the historical diamonds the famous Lentheric was once sent for from Paris on the occasion of a Court ball, to arrange the princess's hair "à la frigate," and transform her into a quasi Marie Antoinette, whom one would have been very sorry to have seen starting for the scaffold.

When the wind of revolution swept over Germany the dethroned princes were spared this punishment. They departed for foreign countries, and not for the scaffold. Germany, left to herself and no longer intoxicated by Berlin, has not massacred a single one of her sovereigns of yesterday. And this fact alone should rightly afford food for reflection to all those who speak of Germany without really knowing her.

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In the little Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha life was quite different from that at the Court of Thurn and Taxis. Here nature and art joined hands. There were no showy processions, no studied etiquette; only a charming and distinguished simplicity which exemplified the taste of this German prince of high and human culture—my uncle, the reigning Duke Ernest II, whose kindness to me I have already mentioned.

He never tired of spoiling me, and he wished me to feel that whenever I was at the palace I was a queen. His affection never changed. In his society and that of my aunt the duchess, who was also very affectionate and kind to me, I have often forgotten the misery of my marriage.

His stag-hunts in the beautiful country of Thuringia, through forests of firs and beeches, were for me an intoxicating pleasure.

I followed the duke's lead; he was a good shot and a good horseman; his years did not trouble him. Often, in the mountains, I rode a white mule, and the duke remarked on the touch of colour which my mount and I made in that rustic countryside.

In the evening, when the weather was fine, we dined under the big trees, which were lit up by well-arranged lanterns. I usually wore a light dress to please the duke, who also liked me to adorn myself with a garland of flowers which he himself made up every day, as an act of delicate homage from the most courteous of uncles.

When I stayed with the Duchess Marie at Rosenau, I also passed many happy hours. Her daughters were lovely girls. What a radiant apparition was Princess Marie, now Queen of Rumania! Once seen—she was never forgotten!

Coburg, the cradle of a family which has given to Europe so many kings and queens, princes and princesses, Royal and Imperial, has witnessed numerous gatherings

of the present generation. A marriage, an engagement, or a holiday invariably brought the members of the Coburg family to their native country. Young and old were happy to return and forget some of the duties which their position demanded; others were glad to forget the burden of their studies. Each tried to be himself and to behave as an ordinary human being.

The delights of a normal existence are very attractive to those who are deprived thereof by their position and their duties. The general public has a false idea of royalty. It believes them to be different from what they are, while, as a matter of fact, they really wish to be the same as anyone else.

No doubt princes, like William II, are to be met with who think that they are composed of a different clay from the rest of mankind. They have lost their heads by posing before the looking-glass and by inhaling the incense of flattery. They are merely accidents. Any man who suffered similarly would be just as bad, no matter to what class he belonged. It is true that the disease would not then have the same social consequences. Again, Monarchism has become more and more under control and is practically limited to a symbolic function, since it depended more on one man than another. It could have been both efficacious and influential if the prince had possessed personality; but if he possessed mediocre qualities without serious influence of any sort he was merely a nonentity. After him would perhaps come a better ruler. But everything is a lottery,

and universal suffrage and the elections of Parliaments are no less blind than fate.

At Coburg I was brought into close association with the Empress Frederick, who died with her ambitions unfulfilled, great in her isolation. She saw with an eye which knew no illusions the Royal and Imperial crown of Prussia and Germany pass swiftly from her husband to her son. The egotism and the vanity of the " Personage " aroused in her more fear than hope. And with what an expression of pity did her eyes rest on the mediocrity of her daughter-in-law !

The Romanoffs and their relations also remained faithful to Coburg. The grand dukes the brothers of the Duchess Marie, her sisters-in-law the Grand Duchesses Vladimir and Serge, who were both beautiful in a different style, brought with them echoes of the stately and complex Court of Russia, that Asiatic Court which I always felt was a thousand miles and a thousand years beyond the comprehension of the present century.

Amongst other memorable ceremonies which I have witnessed at the cradle of the family, I have retained the remembrance of the marriage of the Grand Duke of Hesse with Princess Melita, who became later the Grand Duchess Cyril. Happiness seemed to preside at the fête. Love had been invited—a rare guest at princely unions.

I will not say much about the betrothal of poor " Nick " with Alice of Hesse, which was also celebrated at Hesse.

He who was to become the Tsar Nicholas II, appeared a sad, timid, nervous and insignificant man, at any rate

from a worldly point of view. His fiancée was distant in manner, absorbed and self-centred. Already her entourage was concerned about her visionary and rather eccentric tendencies.

She had replaced Princess Beatrice (who had married Henry of Battenberg) as Queen Victoria's reader and favourite companion. The Queen desired the throne of Russia for her granddaughter, and she brought about the marriage of which I witnessed the betrothal ceremonies. The old Queen presided. But everything lacked gaiety. If joy appeared to reign for a moment it seemed nevertheless to be forced. One felt depressed by the weight of some unknown calamity. Perhaps Destiny wished to warn Alice of Hesse and Nicholas of Russia of their impending fate.

CHAPTER XIV

Queen Victoria

IS it possible for me to mention the name of Queen Victoria without remembering that the Prince of Coburg and myself were often the guests of our aunt and cousin? One of the most hospitable of women, she revelled in the joys of domesticity, and liked nothing better than to gather her relatives around her, preferably the Coburgs, the family of which the Prince Consort was a member.

Although the Queen was extremely short, afflicted with a corpulency that was almost a deformity, and an excessively red face, she nevertheless possessed an air of great distinction when she entered the room, supported by one of the magnificent Indian servants who were her personal attendants. She usually carried a white handkerchief so arranged that the lace border showed, and she favoured a black silk gown with a small train, the corsage cut in V shape. She wore round her neck a locket containing a miniature of Prince Albert, her never-to-be-forgotten husband, on her head a widow's cap of white crêpe; she very rarely wore gloves. On special occasions the Koh-i-noor, that wonderful diamond, the treasure of treasures of India, sparkled with a thousand fires in the folds of the crêpe cap.

The Queen did not leave much impression of her personality, although she was most impressive in her movements, her tones and her look. Her nose had a curious way of trembling, which was almost an index of her thoughts. And how shall I describe that amazingly cold glance which she was wont to cast over the family circle? The slightest error in dress, the slightest breach of etiquette was instantly noticed. A hint or a reprimand followed in a voice that brooked no reply. Then her nose wrinkled, her lips became compressed, her face flushed a deeper scarlet, and the whole of the Royal Person appeared to be swept by the storm of anger.

But once the storm had passed, the Queen smiled her charming smile, as if she wished to efface the memory of her previous ill-humour.

In arriving or departing she always bowed to those around her with a curious little protective movement.

On one occasion I had the misfortune to displease her.

The Queen detested the curled fringes which hid the forehead and were then fashionable. This rather unbecoming mode is within the recollection of many. I admit I adopted it. Fashion is fashion. This style of coiffure greatly annoyed the Queen, who said to me one day: "You must dress your hair differently, and in a manner more suitable to a princess."

She was right. Unfortunately the Prince of Coburg, who equally disliked this curled coiffure, was present when our aunt made this remark. If she had given him the

Koh-i-noor he could not have been better pleased. I was therefore treated to a sound scolding from my husband, which resulted in making me decide not to take any notice of the Queen's censure. My hair still remained in curls on my forehead.

At Windsor, as in the Isle of Wight, the Queen drove out every evening about 6 o'clock—no matter what the weather might be. We were usually honoured by accompanying her. Occasionally we were obliged to wait quite a long time for the Queen to make her appearance. At last, preceding the Queen, a plaid on his arm, a flask of whisky slung over his shoulder, came John Brown, the faithful Scotsman whose doings occupied such a prominent position in the *Court Circular*, and who, like many others of his kind, represents an unpublished feuilleton in the history of Courts.

He led the way, ensconced himself in the brake drawn by two grey horses, and the drive—which lasted about two hours—began.

Evening fell. John Brown moved about in his seat. He frequently turned his head, hopeful to receive the Queen's orders to return. Was this anxiety on account of his fear of rheumatism, or of some chill, which, notwithstanding the comforting properties of whisky, would have affected his health and prevented him fulfilling his duties to the Queen? I really cannot say. All I know is that John Brown detested twilight drives on a damp evening. They always affected his temper, and he did not attempt to conceal his feelings—but, for that matter,

he never attempted to do anything contrary to his inclination.

Even the Queen's children experienced John Brown's autocracy.

It happened that the Prince of Wales, afterwards the great King Edward VII, once wanted to see his mother on urgent and unexpected business. But John Brown opened the door of the Queen's room and said decisively: "You cannot see the Queen, Sir."

If in the intimacy of her daily life Queen Victoria allowed herself some moments of relaxation, she was, nevertheless, a great Sovereign and an imposing figure. Her Jubilee, celebrated with a splendour which my contemporaries will easily remember, showed her real status in the world. The procession through London in the midst of a delirious and cheering populace, the cavalcade of kings, princes, rajahs, and other representatives of the Dominions, resplendent in their magnificent uniforms and blazing with precious stones, was a spectacle worthy of the "Arabian Nights."

We shall never look upon the like again. Men will never honour temporal power as they did when they thus exalted a woman who so nobly represented the Past, the Present and the Future of the United Kingdom, the Empire of India, and the Colonies.

Do not say "vanity of vanities." Pomp and Circumstance have their reasons for existence. A society which does not possess a theocracy, an aristocracy and a pomp in proportion to its institutions is a moribund society. It will

always be necessary to return to the equivalents of Sovereignty, the Court and Divinity, without which the discrowned social edifice will be a barn or a ruin.

It was on the occasion of one of the great Jubilee entertainments that, owing to my annoying and incorrigible habit of unpunctuality, I arrived late to take my place in the Royal cortège. I will admit that I was often purposely late, because I knew that this enraged the Prince of Coburg beyond anything else, and he always began the day by saying that he knew beforehand I should not be punctual.

Women who read this book will understand how difficult it is to be quite punctual for an engagement when one is wearing a special gown for the first time. Men will never understand these feminine difficulties!

I frankly acknowledge that on this occasion I ought to have arranged matters differently; I did not wish to be in fault. State ceremonial exacted that nobody should be absent at the formation of the cortège. And, as owing to my marriage, my rank and position relegated me towards the end, quite a number of kings and queens had been obliged to wait until I made my appearance.

When I entered I was, naturally, in a state of extreme confusion. But at this period I was in the heyday of my beauty. I knew that I was beautiful and admired. I saw most eyes turned unsympathetically in my direction. The women looked cross, but happily the men, who at first seemed severe, were not long in softening towards me. I was dazzled by the light of these earthly suns!

But to hesitate was to be lost! It behoved me to

derive instant advantage from the situation. Silence and impassiveness greeted the apparition of the culprit who had dared hold up the progress of the Queen of England and her illustrious suite. I realized that my entrance must be of the kind which succeeds only once in a lifetime.

I took my time—and I put all the grace imaginable into my curtsy to the Queen, and my bow to the assembled Court.

I approached to kiss my mother's hand, who, overjoyed to hear the flattering murmur which followed my method of asking pardon, drew me towards her, saying as she did so: "You were made to be a queen."

Even now a tear rises from my heart to my eyes. What a strange nature we possess! But when one has been metaphorically born on the steps of a throne, one feels the need for success, homage and ovations. One not only preserves their memory, but one also retains the wish for them and the regret when they no longer exist.

CHAPTER XV

The Drama of my Captivity and my Life as a Prisoner —The Commencement of Torture

MY misfortunes, alas! are known to the public all over the world. But it is not on me that they weigh most heavily.

If calumny and persecution, assisted by the most powerful influences, have continually added blow upon blow, one truth, at least, is patent: *I was not—I am not—mad*, and those who endeavoured to affirm that I was insane, did so to their shame, and, I also hope, to their sorrow.

"Nevertheless," it was said, "the princess is peculiar." Others, better informed, declared emphatically, "She is weak-minded."

Not that, thank Heaven!

My "expenditure," my "prodigality," my "debts," and "my relinquishing my interests and my will to my entourage" have all been objected to.

Let us briefly discuss these "peculiarities" and these "weaknesses."

It is perfectly true that at times I have been extravagant. I have said, and I still repeat, that this extravagance was a way of revenging myself for the constraints and pettiness of an oppressive avarice.

It is true, as I have also admitted, that, as in the natural order of events I thought I should inherit a considerable fortune, I have been weak in some things and I have not resisted certain temptations.

People talk of the fantastic sums of money which I have spent. I calculate that I have not disbursed ten millions of francs since 1897, the year when I made a bid for freedom. Higher figures have been given, but these are represented by the exaggerations of speculators and usurers sent by my enemies to help their case, and to bear witness of " follies " after having palmed off their worthless securities on me.

Everyone knows the edifying story of the German creditor who appeared before the Court at Brussels deputed to pay my debts out of the funds accruing to me from the inheritance of the King, and put in a claim for seven million marks, which was reduced to nothing after due inquiry and verification of what he had really advanced and received.

If I were to lower myself to write the story of the various manœuvres against my independence, all with one object of placing me in such a position that I could neither live nor act, my readers would say : " It is impossible, she is romancing."

But the most unlikely romances are not those which are published. Life alone reveals them.

Reflect; I had to choose between slavery, imprisonment in a madhouse, or flight and, in consequence, an active defence of my personal rights.

I fled, and I have defended myself. But, in order to capture and break me, my allowance was reduced to a mere pittance, and, later, even the means of getting my daily bread were cut off.

I had lost the best of mothers; the King, deceived and irritated, but more politic than I in all that concerned me, placed appearances above the obligations of his conscience, and took no further interest in the cruel fate of his eldest daughter.

From the time of my incarceration my sisters and the rest of my family sided with the King. I saw myself forgotten by my relatives, who for years never came near me in the asylum.

I was either mad or I was not mad. To abandon me thus showed that I was not.

The Press at last became indignant at this neglect. Then my relatives came, but oh, very rarely! It was so painful, so embarrassing for them—but it was not embarrassing for me.

When I escaped, their pretended pity gave way to open anger. . . .

It was necessary, however, for me to live and to make as much return as I could for services which had been rendered me. At last I was compelled to go to law—a new crime!

My crime did not consist in my rebellion against a husband and a marriage of convenience that had become impossible. . . . Have I been the first woman to be forced into matrimony? . . . My crime consisted in showing that

deplorable spirit which the world rarely pardons—the fighting spirit, the spirit of resistance.

The world dislikes a woman who defends herself, and I admit the mystery of procedure and the devious ways of the law have always been beyond me, but a woman who defends herself resolutely, for the sake of principle, honour and right, this woman is detestable. . . . She wishes to prove herself in the right against established authority; she creates a scandal; she cries: "I am not mad!" She cries: "I have been robbed!" Why, such a woman is a public nuisance.

As a rule, well-bred people who are imprisoned and robbed do not make much noise about it. But in the case of the daughter of a king and the wife of a prince who objects to being thought either demented or a dupe, it is unforgivable of her to create a scandal. Had she done the right thing she would not have been talked about. She would still be in the shadow of the lime trees of the Court; and, as she wants to dabble in literature, she could have written a book about the glory of human justice in Belgium and elsewhere.

Many thanks! My conscience is still my own. I will not yield it up. I will die misunderstood, slandered and robbed, my last word will be a word of protest. That for which I have been reproached must be vindicated; I will make good. I have nothing to be ashamed of as regards my past "extravagances."

God be thanked that my "victims" have always been paid in full, and always to their own advantage.

I should consider myself dishonoured had I caused anyone to lose anything due to him, no matter how small the sum. I would rather have settled with the cheats than have disputed with them.

Having written so fully about my expenditure, let me now turn to the so-called surrender of my fortune and my will to my entourage.

Let none be deceived! Touching this, slander has always attacked one person alone, he to whom I have consecrated my life as he has vowed his life to me. His enemies have credited him with their own base motives. They did not want to see, and they denied that he was, by his greatness of soul, far above all miserable calculations of self-interest.

In vain he threw into the abyss all that he had, all that he was likely to possess. What sublime abnegation, stifled by hate beneath its hideous inventions!

Oh, noble friend, what has not the howling and monstrous beast of hatred said of you?

No doubt you, like myself, were unable to struggle against fraudulent financiers, deceitful men of law and treacherous friends. But to dare to insinuate that you have ever subjugated my will, misled my steps, falsified my acts—ah! it is more absurd than infamous.

I have, I always have had, a power of resistance capable of sacrificing everything to an ideal of honour and liberty, otherwise I should have been a mere doll, or a weathercock responsive to every breath.

Full of consciousness as regards the essentials of

human dignity, I should then be unconsciousness personified for things of secondary importance.

Is not that foolish?

But let us leave this topic and throw a new light on the subject of the incredible attempts of a hatred which nothing could disarm up to that day when another justice, not that of man, overthrew thrones so unworthily occupied and delivered me from the persecutions of which I was the object.

On the eve of their fall the German and Austro-Hungarian monarchs still believed they could do as they liked with me. The wrongs I suffered are only one example of what they dared do. What crimes have they not committed which still lie hidden! And what corruption clings even to their memory!

The commencement of the intrigues which brought about my fall is known to the world.

I was at Nice with my daughter. Dora, who represented alike my hope and my consolation, was taken from me by her fiancé, who was in league with the Prince of Coburg, and who broke the solemn promise he had given me.

The prince instinctively felt that I intended to make my escape, and he knew that with me would also vanish his hopes of possessing my inheritance from the King of the Belgians.

"She might get a divorce," he thought to himself. "She might marry again."

I had thought of divorce. This might well have to

come much later. But if I could not help freeing myself from a promise to a man who had destroyed the reasons which were the basis of the spoken vow, I hesitated about freeing myself from my vows to an invisible and silent God, who does not corrupt, deceive or persecute.

The indissolubility of marriage is one thing; the severance of the ties of the flesh is another. The longer I live the more I have become convinced that divorce is a scourge. We must have courage to admit that individual cases ought to be considered of no account, the interest of the community must alone be considered. The higher the value that is set on marriage the better will society become. The marriage tie has become something excessively fragile, and as a result society possesses no solidity. The Church is right. But who among us does not stumble, and which of us does not disregard the fact that Divine law is essentially a human law?

The count received at Nice the seconds of the Prince of Coburg, to whom the Court of Francis Joseph had relegated this duty. The duel brought the two adversaries face to face in the Cavalry Riding School at Vienna in February, 1898. The lieutenant fired twice in the air, and twice the general fired at the lieutenant. They were then handed swords. The lieutenant continued to treat the general with respect and touched him lightly on the right hand.

He thus added to the feelings of hatred which the prince already had towards him. Three weeks later he was implicated in that abominable story of the forged bills

of exchange which was entirely an invention, and to which, later, the Reichsrath accorded full justice.

The impossible judgment which pretended to dishonour one of the most noble of men would never have been pronounced if I had been called as a witness.

But my enemies hastened to have me incarcerated. My evidence was suppressed and the count was condemned.

A man still lives, silent and hidden, who, if I reckon rightly, must be seventy-five years old. I write these lines hoping that he will be able to read them before he disappears finally from the world.

Now, when my memory invokes him, I see him standing at the threshold of the madhouse into which his hatred had caused me to be thrown, and I see him at the gate of the prison where he had caused Count Geza Mattachich to be confined. But I should like him to know that his victims have pardoned him. They could, to-day, demand satisfaction from Austrian justice, now freed from the constraints of former years. His victims will spare him. Let Him who will judge us all, judge this old man. I do not even know who were the instruments of his vengeance.

Not long since in Vienna a poor creature three-parts blind and with one foot in the grave was pointed out to me, and I heard the name of the Jewish lawyer, now repudiated by all that is estimable in Jewry in Austria, who was the agent, the instigator, and the counsellor of the implacable hatred which determined on my destruction.

I looked back at him thinking that this same personage,

so stubborn in his system of police severity, and in his service of the abuse of power, had also armed the hand of the woman who killed my son. . . .

And greatly moved, I asked myself:

"Have they understood?"

Yes, perhaps. Doubtless they are no longer what they were. Life must also have changed them.

Can they, without pain, remember yesterday?

To speak candidly, we fled in order to escape these enemies; I did not stop to think, and I believed that they could have ordered our arrest. I also believed the word of emissaries in the pay of the prince. We were then in France where I ran no risk. I wished to leave for England and implore the help and protection of Queen Victoria who had given me so many evidences of her affection.

My faithful lady-in-waiting, Comtesse Fugger, shared my fears and accompanied me in my hasty flight.

We had scarcely reached London when we received all sorts of mysterious hints from pretended friends. We must go back at once or the count and I would be lost. We therefore left London without any attempt on my part to rejoin the Queen, whom we had passed on our journey, as she had just left England for the south of France.

We were not of the stuff of which criminals are made. They are more callous. Hemmed in by our own too-credulous imagination, we then thought of taking refuge with the count's mother at the Château de Lobor.

No one has ever understood why, and how, I brought myself to go to Croatia, to the house of Countess Keglevich.

Her second husband, the stepfather of Count Geza Mattachich, was a member of the Chamber of the Hungarian Magnates, a Deputy and friend of the Vassals of Croatia. I felt convinced that nobody would dare to carry me off whilst under his roof.

Our adventure was by this time a public topic. The papers of every country referred to it. The duel was the culminating point of this terrible publicity. And, since calumny and its manœuvres had not, as yet, had any effect, we were looked upon as romantic persons whose sincerity disarmed criticism and called forth feelings of sympathy.

When I think that since then I have been taxed with duplicity, I cannot help smiling. Few cases can be quoted of a more open existence than mine. I have never concealed from my friends what an exaction my life with my husband was to me, and when I was powerless, I never made any mystery of the help which I found in a chivalrous deliverer most providentially placed in my path.

But the world does not forgive those who will not wear a mask of duplicity, and who refuse to conceal the feelings of their heart.

So many people are compelled to hide their feelings. But we, but I . . . truly, where is the crime?

I am quite prepared to die; I have no fear of the justice of God.

Strong in our common loyalty we were foolishly persuaded that in France, England, Germany and elsewhere we should be in danger; we had been warned that my husband's intention was to put me in an asylum—Gunther of Holstein had told me this, and had spoken of having me protected by his all-powerful brother-in-law. . . . What an unforgettable comedy! We arrived in Croatia feeling sure that under the Keglevich roof I should be safe.

The count confided me to his relatives for so long as it would take to obtain a separation from the Prince of Coburg. The talk died down. Public opinion was on my side, chiefly in Agram where the count and his family were regarded with affection. At Vienna even the inimical camarilla was disarmed. We were now only two creatures like so many others; the one bruised by her broken chains, the other willing to assist her. And this devotion perhaps, one day, would be sanctified by time.

Oh dreams! Oh hopes! We are your playthings. The awful reality rises up and rends us.

We had not foreseen the plot against us and what odious accusations would be levelled at the count.

Suddenly his stepfather, who was well known at Court and had influence in other directions, was separated from us. Apparently he had been told, in confidence, of the crime imputed to his stepson, and the accusation did its work.

This explanation of his change of manner is the most indulgent I can give.

The support of Count Keglevich thus failing us, the

countess, torn between love of her son and her husband, was placed in a very delicate position, and our enemies had therefore a free field at Agram.

However, there were two parties; on our side were the students and the peasants, and against us were the police and the authorities.

Directly the count thought that we had the support of the students and the country people, he was afraid, and delivered us up. The prince's lawyer—this man whom I cannot name—was given full power. The Emperor consented to let him act as he thought best, and he had a pocket full of warrants.

I ought to say, on behalf of Francis Joseph, that he had been assured that the count wished to kill me. To which the Sovereign is said to have replied:

"I don't want a second Meyerling. Do what is necessary."

The prince and his hirelings were not lacking in inventive skill. Their measures were well taken and their plans well laid. A special train was kept in readiness at the station at Agram for the woman who was to be declared mad for reasons of State, and a cell in the military prison was prepared for the man who was to be *made* a criminal in the eyes of the world.

All Austria knew this, as well as many other things.

A doctor (an official whom I had never seen), with my certificate of lunacy in readiness, was waiting for me at Agram by order of the police, together with a nurse from the Doebling Lunatic Asylum.

These people and a *posse* of detectives lay in wait for a whole week. All depended on getting us to go into the town. They would not have dared to have arrested us at the Château of Lobor in the open country, where our defenders would have hastened to our succour in the twinkling of an eye.

The military authorities ordered the count to proceed to Agram, and being an officer on leave he was forced to obey.

We had a presentiment of some "coup." But our situation at the château had become awkward owing to the change of attitude of its owner, who had now left, taking Countess Keglevich with him. It seemed to us that nothing could be worse than this cruel estrangement. However, the count had to obey orders, so I, too, resolved to go to Agram. It was impossible for me to shun any danger that threatened him.

So we left. I went, with my devoted Countess Fugger, to the Hôtel Pruckner. The count went to the rooms retained for him, and I to mine. We arrived late at night.

In the morning, towards nine o'clock, when I was still in bed, the door of my room was forced open. The prince's lawyer entered, followed by men dressed and gloved in black—police officers in full dress. The doctor and the nurse from Doebling formed the background.

The special train was waiting with steam up in the station. Some hours later, without having a chance to collect myself, I was suddenly snatched from normal society and found myself in a cell at the Doebling

Asylum on the outskirts of Vienna. By means of a grating in the door I could be constantly watched. The window was barred on the outside. I heard shouts and howls in the distance.

They had placed me in the part of the asylum reserved for those who were raving mad. I saw one patient who had been released for an airing running round a little sanded court, the walls of which were padded with mattresses. He was jumping and throwing himself about, uttering piercing shrieks.

I started back, horrified, covering my eyes and ears. I threw myself on my narrow bed and, sobbing bitterly, I tried to hide my head under the pillow and the bedclothes so as neither to hear nor see.

What might I not have become without the memory of the Queen and without the help of God? My faith sustained me and gave me the courage of martyrs.

Meanwhile at Agram, the count, also under arrest, was being told that by virtue of the Austrian Military Code of 1768 he was accused—by whom will soon appear—of having negotiated bills bearing the signatures of Princess Louise of Saxe-Coburg and the Archduchess Stéphanie.

I was to be declared mad, and he was to be proclaimed a forger!

The worst they did to me was nothing compared with what they brought against him.

Ah! this justice of the Court which revolution has since swept away! Ah! this code of an army, a slave to a throne

and not the guardian of the country! What defiance of good sense at the dawn of the twentieth century!

And then we are astonished when the people rise!

The count was put in prison on the accusation of the same nameless individual who had interested himself as a police agent in my affairs. The Governor of Agram was under his orders. He believed the word—or appeared to do so—of this petty lawyer who stated that Count Geza Mattachich had forged my signature, and that of my sister Stéphanie, on bills which had already been nine months in the hands of the bill discounters of Vienna, who had suddenly (!) discovered the signatures to be forgeries.

My signature was in my own writing. This was why it was not advisable to allow me to speak.

My sister's signature was a forgery and added afterwards, but by whom and why?

It would have been most inadvisable to have allowed me to ask this. The count knew nothing about these bills and the use of the funds which they represented.

It would have been most inadvisable for me to have been on the scene. I was thoroughly well guarded.

The count, according to Austrian military justice, found himself in the presence of an *auditor*, a magistrate who was *accuser, defender and judge combined.*

All this may be deemed incredible. But there was worse to come. On December 22, 1898, the count was condemned to forfeit his rank and his title of nobility, and to undergo six years' cellular detention for having "swindled" about 600,000 florins from a "third person."

But on the preceding June 15, when the forged bills became due, the third person mentioned . . . had been wholly reimbursed by the Prince of Coburg, who was entitled to act for me from the day I arrived at Doebling, and the count was lost. Yes, lost and for ever—at least so thought his executioner. But, although, thanks to zealous friends, the count had been able to obtain a declaration signed by the bill discounters attesting that they had no claims and that no harm had been done them by Count Geza Mattachich, this evidence was refused and held up by the *auditor*. It was not even on the register.

And the abominable judgment pretended to make the count, this gentleman amongst gentlemen, a forger and a thief, although he was innocent and everyone knew his innocence.

But I am dwelling on infamies which it is superfluous to recall. It is well known that the judgment was quashed four years later by the Reichsrath, thanks to the indignant Socialist party.[1] The count has been avenged from the height of the parliamentary tribunal, and the sort of justice that dishonoured the Austrian Army has ceased to exist, and has been swallowed up in the ruins of a Monarchy and a Court which was too long a criminal one.

[1] Extract from the proceedings of the sitting of the Reichsrath, held on April 17, 1902. Speech by the Deputy Daszynski:

"Gentlemen, the second judgment which has been pronounced following the demand for the revision of the first trial has admitted that Monsieur Mattachich has not forged any one of the signatures!

"This verdict of the superior military tribunal is of great importance in the whole of this affair. For, gentlemen, if the superior Military Court had simply rejected the appeal we might still believe that Geza Mattachich had forged the two signatures. But, since Mattachich has wronged no one, since

the usurers have recovered the money together with a high rate of interest, totalling several hundreds of thousands of florins, on the very day the bills fell due, since out of all this money not a farthing has found its way into the pocket of Mattachich, a matter which, in fact, has not been raised against him, we have the right to ask ourselves what interest Mattachich-Keglevich would have—apart from admitting a singular taste for perversity on his part—to corroborate by a forged signature the bills of the Princess of Coburg which were recognized as good?

" And now, gentlemen, if we put the question *qui prodest?* We will reply certainly not Mattachich-Keglevich, for that would have no other result than that of sending him to the penitentiary of Moellersdorf—but good for money-lenders. It was of the greatest advantage to them that a forged signature should be added to a real one, for it is a fact well known to usurers that a forged signature is worth more than an authentic one, and I will tell you why.

" With an authentic signature the husband who is obliged to honour this sort of debt can say: ' I consent to pay the principal but not the excessive interest.' It is thus that the Prince of Coburg has paid in many instances. But this time the usurers replied: ' No; thanks to the forgery, we are in a position to cause a scene—to threaten: we have in our hands a weapon directed against the Prince of Coburg and against the Court circles.'

" Gentlemen, I have sufficiently proved to you that the second judgment put the affair on a different footing, and threw quite a new light on the subject. Taking advantage of this fact, Mattachich appealed to the Court of Sovereign Appeal, and that tribunal has decided, that after the examination of the procedure they had cause to confirm the second judgment and to reject the appeal of the condemned man.

" At the same time, gentlemen, numerous facts have accumulated which clearly prove the innocence of Mattachich. Notably, a letter has been produced which was equally forged, and which indicated to the judges the line to follow.

" This document was a letter written in German addressed to Leopold II, King of the Belgians. It has been superabundantly proved to be fictitious. It had not been written in the interests of Mattachich but in those of the money-lenders. And those who had committed this forgery were much more in the company of usurers than in that of Mattachich.

" For the question is not one, gentlemen, of simple moneylenders. Our business is not with ' Directors of a house of Commission,' as they call them in the judgments, but with artful business men who lend money to various persons of the Court at a totally usurious rate of interest, and to whom the signatures of these persons, notably of the widowed Hereditary Princess Stéphanie, are perfectly well known.

" Very well! I tell you, gentlemen, if I cannot put before you all the elements of the *procès,* I rely here, not only on vague presumptions but on the depositions of witnesses, on absolutely incontestable affirmations which prove that Mattachich-Keglevich, who languished for four years in a penitentiary, is an innocent man.

" Eight days before his arrest they consented to recognize, by notarial deed, that they had given him every ' opportunity to flee ' (' Hear, hear! ') on condition that he should abandon the Princess Louise.

" Gentlemen, one does not propose to assure a man like Mattachich-Keglevich by notarial deed of his freedom to depart to a foreign land. These people simply wished to rid themselves of him, they wished to glut the ven-

geance of the husband prince, and it is on this account that judicial military murder has been accomplished. And, if that did not suffice, by order of the Count Thun, then President of the Council, Princess Louise was banished, like an unfortunate stranger, from the territory of kingdoms and of countries represented in the Reichsrath, despite the fact that she was the wife of an Austrian general. ('Hear, hear!') Yes, gentlemen, we are now going to make this fact public; read to-morrow in the report of the sitting, my interpellation on this subject, and you will then find the dates and all the relative details. Yes, gentlemen, in the interest of certain exalted personages who possess much wealth, certain things take place that could never happen if we were a truly Constitutional State. ('Very true!')

"And now, gentlemen, I ask you: who should be held responsible for having thrown these persons into prison solely in order that the wealthy Prince of Coburg might glut his vengeance? Were they, by chance, officers? No, I tell you quite frankly, the officers were guiltless. They would never have pronounced such a sentence if Mattachich and the witnesses had appeared before them, and if the accused had been allowed to question the witnesses, if the Press had been able to give a report of the debates, if the gifted lieutenant had had liberty of speech in a public audience, if he had been able to have a lawyer to represent him. Is it not truly malignant to throw people into prison and cause them to be condemned by an auditor and by judges who know nothing of the affair! Gentlemen, I wish to accuse no one of forgery, I wish to charge no one. My aim is not to denounce an institution which is the fatal source of all faults and mistakes.

"And, seeing that we have here the occasion of debating on such doings in open Parliament, I address myself to M. the Minister of National Defence: Does he wish, he who is a man of honour, does he wish, not only as an old man with white hair, but also as a soldier whose conscience is pure and tranquil, to take on his shoulders the responsibility of the anguish and tortures inflicted on an innocent person? Will he keep silent, or will he speak?

"If he is not, perhaps, in a position to make a decision to-day, he has no right to hesitate any longer to throw light on this mysterious affair."

CHAPTER XVI

Lindenhof

CAN anyone adequately realize the sufferings of a woman who sees herself erased from the world and taken to a madhouse—the conscious prisoner of an odious abuse of power?

At Doebling, and afterwards at Purkesdorf, my tortures would have been beyond human endurance if I alone had been obliged to suffer. But with the hope of Divine justice, the knowledge that another was submitting to a worse punishment solely on my account gave me strength to endure. The loss of honour is as terrible as the loss of reason. I could not abandon myself to utter despair whilst the count heroically resisted his persecutors with a dignity which was afterwards admitted when the debates in the Reichsrath threw a new light on my affairs.

But what terrible hours I have passed! What nights of agony! What horrible nightmares! What tears, what sobs! I tried in vain to control myself. Fortunately my attendants pitied me. That was some consolation. I even felt that the doctors, embarrassed by the responsibility of my case, looked at me kindly. With the exception of two or three miserable creatures, bought over by my enemies through greed or stupidity, I have hardly found any physicians who were not disgusted at the injustice

meted out to me, and who asked nothing better than to shift the responsibility of keeping me in a madhouse on to someone else's shoulders.

Public opinion in Austria being extremely hostile, my executioner and his accomplices found it advisable to transfer me to a quiet and charming asylum in Saxony. I was therefore taken to Lindenhof, near the little town of Koswig in the midst of the forests, less than an hour's journey by rail from Dresden.

Lindenhof! The actual meaning signifies "The Lime Trees of the Court." Calming lime trees! Charming lime trees! The name recalled to me "Unter den Linden" (Under the Lime Trees) at Berlin, and the obligations which I owed to my son-in-law and his family, who were now reassured by the knowledge of my captivity in Saxony. The inheritance of the King would not fall into my wasteful hands!

No member of my entourage dear to me was allowed to remain with me. My good Countess Fugger was forced to leave me from morning till night to the care of my jailers. By way of compensation those at Lindenhof were supposed to treat me with all the deference due to my rank. Fear of public opinion is the beginning of wisdom where princes are concerned.

It was impossible for anyone now to say, as in the case of my former experiences, that I was not treated as a princess and a king's daughter. I had a separate house, a carriage, maids, and a companion! I was allowed to go out when Dr. Pierson, the medical superintendent,

thought it advisable. But my house was surrounded by the walls of a madhouse; the coachman and footman were policemen; the companion only occupied that position in order to keep me a prisoner and make voluminous reports about all that I said or did.

My cage was certainly gilded, and it possessed various outlets on the country and the adjacent town. But, all the same, it was a tomb, and I realized that I was dead to all those who had once known me, beginning with the members of my own family.

I have said that, ashamed of the crime to which they had tacitly consented, my relations allowed years to pass before they came to see the "invalid." It was only when public opinion censured their heartless behaviour that they decided to visit me.

The indignation against the wickedness of the punishment meted out to Count Mattachich had become stronger than the power that desired to crush him. In mentioning him, the Press remembered my existence. It was then that my daughter and my aunt, the Comtesse de Flandre, came to see me, and my sister Stéphanie gave some sign of life.

I had lost my beloved mother without seeing her again. Her letters—although at the same time good and cruel—were my most cherished relics. But whenever I read them my heart was torn, as I felt that my mother had been convinced that I was really insane.

As for the King—alas!—he sent me no word. Doubtless his mind, like that of the Queen, had been poisoned—was he, too, not certain of the count's guilt? What

guile had not been employed in his case! In order to play my husband's and my son-in-law's game it was necessary to make my father believe absolutely in our "crimes."

What could I do, alone in my madhouse, deprived of help and liberty?

But I guessed the plots which were hatched at Brussels, and what support my enemies had obtained in order to triumph over a poor tortured woman. I saw my only chance of salvation by the side of the unfortunate man who was enduring martyrdom in the penitentiary of Moellersdorf, for having endeavoured to save me from an earthly hell and its dishonouring abysses.

Perhaps our mutual fidelity may astonish some people. Few really understand that, for certain natures, suffering constitutes a common bond. Our joys had been ephemeral, our sorrows had been prolonged. We had been misunderstood, misjudged, defamed and tortured. But we had reposed our trust and our hope elsewhere than in men. Often the best have neither the time nor the possibility of knowing and understanding, and thus they condemn the innocent on the strength of appearances, which hatred and duplicity know so well how to exploit to their own advantage.

I had been certified "insane" for four years, when the Court of Vienna, terrified by public outcry, was obliged to abandon one of its victims. The count was pardoned. No sooner did he regain his freedom than, fearless of consequences, he began to plan my deliverance! It was

indeed a perilous enterprise, as the Austrian and German police, in default of a justice which fear of the Press and Parliaments kept somewhat in restraint, were nevertheless at the orders of my enemies.

I have said, and I again repeat, that it seems incredible that we still live.

To begin with, my chivalrous defender found himself entangled in the meshes of the police net, and could not take a single step without being followed by spies of all descriptions. As for myself, I beheld Koswig in a state of siege. Lindenhof was surrounded by gendarmes; even the fir trees afforded them a screen!

Fortified by prayer and hope, I had now become if not accustomed to my chains at least able to support their weight. Always a lover of Nature, I revelled in the sylvan solitudes where I was allowed to walk with my sorrow, of course under the observation of my suite of jailers of both sexes.

I had only one friend—my dog! Shall I ever see that loyal fine face again, and those clear eyes, in which alone in a world of corruption I have seen the disinterested light of welcome?

However, I did not despair. What would happen to innocent prisoners if they were deprived of the pleasures of Hope?

Ah, I well remember that autumn day when I first saw the sun of liberty appear on my horizon, and with its advent those chances of truth, reparation and happiness which my imagination pictured all too quickly!

It was delightful weather. The splendour of the sun illumined the Saxon countryside. It touched with gold the sombre forests that covered the hill near which I loved to walk. This sandy desert planted with fir trees was enlivened by a little hotel called " The Mill on the Crest of the Hill," and it was one of my favourite drives. On this particular day I was driving myself, accompanied by my companion and a groom. Suddenly a cyclist appeared coming in the opposite direction, and who actually grazed the wheels of my carriage as he passed. He looked at me. I knew who he was—it was the count! . . . I had the presence of mind not to betray myself. He was, then, free! I believed that I, too, should regain my liberty on the morrow.

Three years were destined to pass before I escaped.

The alarm had been raised in the enemy camp! It was known that the count had left Vienna. A search for him was at once instituted at Koswig.

My companion, who, influenced by some kindly feelings or by some hope of gain, had allowed the count and myself to have two brief interviews in her presence, securely hidden in the forest, was not long in changing her mind and repenting her leniency.

The count was obliged to desist from any further attempts to see me. The countryside swarmed with police. I was not allowed to leave Lindenhof. My saviour went some distance away in order not to prevent my taking those drives which allowed me a few hours' freedom and comparative happiness away from the horrors of the madhouse.

There now remained only one way to free me. This was first to proclaim, and then to establish my sanity, and to appeal to public sympathy and public meetings in order to achieve my liberation.

A book appeared in which the count demonstrated his own innocence and described the cruelty of which I was the victim. The entire Press re-echoed his indignant outcry.

And the hoped-for help came at last from that generous land of France where my misfortunes were so keenly felt. A French journalist, a writer equally well known and respected (whose name I should like to mention with gratitude, but whose reserve and dislike of publicity I am forced to respect), had gone to Germany in order to prepare some political work. At Dresden he was told about my sufferings. He went at once to see the head of the police, who, greatly embarrassed, acknowledged that I was the victim of Court intrigue. In order to see me personally, this gentleman visited Lindenhof in the character of a neurasthenic. But either from mistrust, or the impossibility of tampering with the diagnosis, he was not accepted as a patient. He returned to Paris, and through his influence *Le Journal*, the powerful daily paper whose independence is so well known, took up my cause. From this moment the count found the support which this paper has extended to so many other deserving cases.

He was still unable to return to Lindenhof. The French journalist, however, came there, and the first news which rekindled my hope came in a letter from my then

unknown friend, which—together with one from the count —was thrown into my carriage by a little boy.

This letter was stolen from me by my companion. The other missive remained in my possession, and in vain did my police-woman attempt to dispossess me of it.

When I read it with a throbbing heart I only found one word, written in a language which I never heard in my captivity—the language of my native land. My eyes filled with tears, I read and re-read this word :

"HOPE."

CHAPTER XVII

How I Regained my Liberty and at the Same Time was Declared Sane

AS I had not been in good health it seemed advisable for me to take the waters at some cure. I really needed treatment, and as small thermal establishments abound in Germany it was not difficult to find a place suitable to my state of health, where my keepers would have no fear of a cosmopolitan crowd, and where they could still guard me as an isolated prisoner.

However, soon after the incident of the letters which had been thrown into my carriage, I was told that I was to stay at Lindenhof. The promised cure was abandoned.

Fortunately the doctor who was called in consultation sided with me, and promised to intervene on my behalf. In the meantime my daily walks ceased. I even decided not to go out at all, as I was completely misled by all the stories which were told me, especially by Dr. Pierson.

He rigorously guarded me, although he always treated me with respect. He knew perfectly well that I was not mad, but he also knew that I was a very remunerative patient; the idea of losing me was extremely unpleasant to him. He continued to watch me, but he also tried to humour me, and he easily persuaded himself that Lindenhof was a really enchanting place.

Had it not been for his position of Doctor in Lunacy and my jailer, his visits would not have been disagreeable to me, as they were not lacking in courtesy.

Dr. Pierson adopted an air of kindness and devotion. He told me, in tones of real alarm, about certain information which he declared came from a reliable source, and which he advised me to take into consideration if I did not wish to grieve him. He said he had heard that bandits had resolved to attack me suddenly in the forest and rob me of the jewels which I usually wore. Dr. Pierson did not deny that the count might have written to me. But he said that the letter which had been seized by my "lady-in-waiting" was not what I imagined it to be. It was spurious and very mysterious. It could not be shown me because it belonged first of all to the Law. I should be well advised to give up the letter I had kept. It evidently emanated from the gang who had planned to rob and assassinate me.

Frightened into listening to him and being utterly depressed by my existence I allowed myself to be convinced. I did not want to go out. For several days I lived in anguish, oppression and uncertainty. I could not sleep. When I reflected, I did not know what to think and what to believe. Suffering upon suffering overwhelmed me. Nobody can conceive the will-power necessary to preserve a certain amount of lucidity when one lives for years among lunatics. The haunting terror is such that if you have not the strength to detach yourself from your surroundings you must inevitably succumb.

But God permitted me to escape in spirit and to rejoin my hoped-for rescuer. I ended by pulling myself together and I again asked to go out. They dared not refuse.

However, I was still somewhat impressed by what I had heard, and I dared not go as far into the forest as formerly. And if I saw one or more cyclists I was afraid, although I said nothing.

Had they come to attack me? I wondered. Had they, perhaps, come to rescue me?

What a power is imagination! The cyclists were only harmless people quietly going about their business.

My doctor-professor had not forgotten his promise. His intervention obtained the desired effect, and it was decreed that I should go to Bad-Elster in Bavaria. This place is in the mountains about a quarter of an hour's drive from the German frontier. If I escaped Charybdis I should encounter Scylla!

The country is wild and the spa deserves to attract a cosmopolitan *clientèle*. But its fame, which is purely German, reassured my jailers. No one would look for me in this modest Bavarian Wiesbaden. And if, peradventure, my defender should arrive, he would find all the avenues to escape well guarded.

In fact, the hotel at which I arrived with my suite of police officials, male and female, was immediately surrounded, according to the rules of the profession, by a cordon of sentries and inspectors.

If any unknown or suspicious person approached he was followed, observed, and promptly identified.

The count took care not to show himself, although, through information which he had procured at Koswig, he was not slow to learn that I had left for Bad-Elster.

The police notified nothing out of the way to my keepers. Personally I was, as usual, neither impatient nor excited. My "lady-in-waiting" could not deny my affability. But within myself I felt that deliverance was at hand.

This intuition was promptly confirmed.

One day, when I was playing tennis, I noticed a fat man whose gait, hat and clothes pronounced him to be an Austrian. His eyes met mine in a very curious manner, but he saluted me respectfully. I could have sworn that his look heralded the coming of the count.

I was not deceived.

A little later, when I was coming out of the dining-room of the hotel, preceded by the doctor attached to my person, and followed by my "lady-in-waiting," a fair man brushed past me and whispered: "Listen! Someone is working for you."

I was obliged to lean against the door; I was suddenly incapable of movement. Fortunately I recovered myself. My two watch-dogs noticed nothing.

The following day I came down to dinner escorted by the doctor and my companion. The waiter who usually attended on us was a little late and was finishing laying the table. Ordinarily he hardly dared look at me, but I now saw that his eyes were speaking to me. At the same time he passed and re-passed his hand over the tablecloth.

He first made a fold, and afterwards he arranged and re-arranged the linen. I seated myself and, at the same moment, I carelessly touched the spot the waiter had seemed to indicate. I heard a crackling of paper underneath the cloth. . . .

My two keepers were discussing Wagner; they talked on ordinary topics. They could see me approving their banalities with a gracious smile, and they redoubled their eloquence. I profited by this to seize and hide the letter so cleverly placed within my reach between the tablecloth and the table.

I read the letter—I devoured its contents—as soon as I was alone in my room. It was from whom I guessed! It announced my approaching liberty. It gave me explanations of what had been done and what still had to be done in order to effect my escape from my long torture. I was to answer in the same way. I could rely on the waiter.

This is how a daily correspondence began between the count and myself. I very soon knew what measures I should have to take, what attitude to adopt, what necessary preparations to make, whom to fear and whom to trust.

The night watchman had been gained over on our side. This brave man, like the waiter, ran a grave risk. No one will ever know the extent of the devotion which the frightful persecution to which I was a victim has evoked and still evokes!

At last I received the eagerly awaited note, which said: "*It will be to-morrow.*"

To-morrow! To-morrow! I had only another day to wait, and then I should be free. . . . This was in August, 1904. For seven years I had been in captivity; I had lived among lunatics, and I had been treated as a lunatic.

One thought alone froze my blood: the count would, no doubt, make his appearance. And I remembered that quite recently my "lady-in-waiting" had shown me a revolver, and coldly warned me that she had orders—from whom?—to shoot any would-be rescuer.

Never were my prayers more ardent. Then, recovering my serenity and my confidence, I made all my preparations.

I needed a few hours in which to arrange my papers, destroy letters, and to sort what I intended to take with me. How was I to do all this without arousing suspicion?

I decided to say that instead of going out in the afternoon I would wash my hair. This proceeding, which I often did myself, afforded me the opportunity of being alone, without the "lady-in-waiting," that indefatigable spy, being alarmed. The chambermaid arranged everything that was necessary, and I made a great show of splashing with the water. But I took good care to keep my hair dry for fear of contracting rheumatism or neuralgia, which would have considerably diminished the good condition of health in which it was so necessary for me to be. I rolled a towel round my head, and I took the necessary measures without being disturbed. When evening came, rested and refreshed by the opportune "washing," I went to the theatre with my usual escort.

Of all the plays I have ever seen, none has left me with so slight remembrance as that with which the little theatre of Bad-Elster regaled its honest audience that evening. I was lost in thought concerning what was to follow, and I said to myself:

"Come what may, if life is a game let us play it to the end." When the performance was over, I returned to my hotel, without letting my secret agitation be noticed. The doctor and the other follower were amiably dismissed on the threshold of my room, and my last words added to their tranquillity:

"We arranged to go to tennis a little earlier to-morrow morning," I said, "but I feel that I shall have a good night—so let us put off our party until an hour later."

How could they doubt but that I was wisely going to try and have a long sleep? Moreover, every evening my clothes and my shoes were taken from me, and although I was not locked in my room (they had intended this at first, as on my arrival all the locks had been renewed), the night watchman had orders not to lose sight of my room, and a cordon of sentries surrounded the hotel.

But, as I have said, the watchman had been won over to my cause, and as to the sentries, I should soon see what was going to happen. I was much more afraid of my "lady-in-waiting," who slept in the room next mine. She had a keen sense of hearing, and she was always on the alert.

I had in my room my favourite dog, the good and

faithful Kiki. What was I to do with him? How would he take my flight? He barked at a fly! The hour had indeed arrived, but I saw many harassing obstacles in the way.

I ruminated on all this while the chambermaid finished her duties. At last I was alone. . . .

I promptly dressed myself in a costume and put on a pair of boots which I had succeeded in concealing in anticipation of my flight. My packing was soon completed. All lights were extinguished, and, hardly daring to breathe, I awaited the signal.

But what signal? I knew nothing. I must listen. . . .

By degrees complete silence reigned in this tranquil corner of Bavaria after the theatre, as is usual in Germany, closed at 10 o'clock. Those who partook of late suppers were few. The calm night enveloped Bad-Elster—a beautiful night with a full moon—one more danger. But I had no choice, and my vigil was soon about to end.

The twelve strokes of midnight sounded, then the half-hour, then one o'clock struck, and almost immediately I heard a scratching at my door like that of a mouse. Kiki raised himself . . . but with a sign I quieted him, and he understood.

I opened the door softly. The shadow of the watchman could be dimly seen in the corridor.

"Here I am," I said, in a low whisper.

"Silence! . . . Hold yourself in readiness. I will return when it is time."

He went away.

I remained for two hours absolutely glued to my door, my valise beside me. At last I saw a glimmer of light. It was the watchman. I turned to my dog, who was watching me uneasily. He pricked up his ears, and, sitting on the corner of a cushion in a chair, he understood that I was going away without him.

I caressed him, saying as I did so: "Kiki, don't make a noise. If you do, I am lost!"

He did not move, he did not bark, he did not even whine.

I was now beside the watchman at the threshold of the door.

"You must take off your boots," he whispered. "You will be heard."

He stooped down and removed my boots; then, taking charge of my small baggage, he conducted me forth, leaning on his arm.

With one last look I said good-bye to the familiar things which I had left in my room, and I again enjoined my good little dog to silence. I went along the corridor into which the rooms of my "lady-in-waiting" and the doctor opened. Thank God, the doors remained closed! Another corridor took us to a staircase by which we gained the ground floor. There, in almost total obscurity, I perceived a shadow, with one finger on its lips. It was the count. . . .

The night watchman would not allow us to delay; he gave me back my boots and guided us, sheltered from the light of the moon by the hotel building, as far as a

small conservatory, and then to a terrace which adjoined the road.

There two sentries had met and were talking peacefully in the moonlight, which, unfortunately for us, now illuminated the road to safety.

We waited anxiously. Luckily they soon separated, and walked away in opposite directions. . . . The count, taking his chance, made me cross the road in a few light bounds. He held my valise; the night watchman remained hidden on the terrace. We were now under the trees on the other side of the road. The sentries had seen and heard nothing! We had still to reach the carriage, which was waiting a little distance away. This was a landau with two horses, a local equipage, which would pass unnoticed. Any other, unknown to the district, would have been signalled and reported.

But a catastrophe occurred. The carriage was not where it should have been. We had a moment of despair. What a night! What suspense! All this agony of mind occurred under the trees pierced by the moon-rays, which seemed peopled with fearful phantoms. At last some of our friends who knew of my escape joined us and conducted us to the carriage. It started, but the tired horses went slowly. Suddenly, in the middle of the wood the vehicle came to a standstill; the driver confessed that he had lost his way.

We had reached a place known as "The Three Stones," the boundaries of three kingdoms, where Bavaria, Saxony and Austria join.

The driver turned his back on the right direction and returned towards Bad-Elster, where we hoped to get to the little station and catch a train for Berlin.

We had the good luck to be rescued from our anxiety by two of our partisans, who, worried by our non-arrival, came upon us unexpectedly and opportunely.

We arrived at the Hof without further incident, and a few hours later we were in the capital of Prussia. When the news of my escape reached my son-in-law and his Imperial brother-in-law they did not believe it. The fuss was tremendous. But matters had been well arranged at Bad-Elster. The brave people there took my part so thoroughly that the German and Austrian police had actually to go to the expense of making inquiries. I had vanished into thin air like a spirit, and they could not find a trace of the count.

In Berlin the secret agents of the Socialist deputy, Doctor Sudekum, who generously defended my cause, awaited us and sheltered us until a lull in the tempest enabled us to gain a hospitable soil.

Everything considered, we resolved to go by automobile to the station where the Orient Express stopped, and then to depart for France across Belgium by this train *de luxe*.

Let us pass over an alarm at the hotel at Magdeburg, where I should have been recognized and denounced had I not called Doctor Sudekum my husband! We seemed very devoted, and it was quite evident that a celebrated Socialist could not have a king's daughter for his wife.

At last I was able to get into a sleeping compartment, and luckily I had it to myself. The train rushed across Germany. The count watched over me and remained outside in the corridor as much as possible. The hours rolled by. At last I heard cries of "Herbesthal"!

I was just entering Belgium. I was about to see my country once more. Without, however, daring to stop there! Alas! The King was on the side of the Prince of Coburg! I hardly dared approach the window. I trembled. The Belgian Customs officials passed through the carriages. There was a knock at the door of my compartment, and the Customs officials appeared behind the conductor. But I had been vouched for, and they retired unsuspiciously.

Oh, the irony of the banal question: "Have you anything to declare?"

On the contrary, what had I *not* to declare? I was the eldest daughter of the great King of these good people who did not recognize me. I wanted to cry out, so as to be heard as far as the Château of Laeken, and denounce the injustice of Fate, which made me a victim and an exile.

I was thinking thus when an old superintendent of the Belgian railways passed. He did not glance carelessly at me as the Customs officials had done; he scrutinized me gravely, and I saw that he knew at once who I was.

The count was watching in the corridor, and he was

also certain that I had been recognized. He followed the superintendent. The man looked at him, read the anxiety in his face, and identifying him, doubtless by the photographs in the newspapers, stopped and said kindly:

"It is our Princess, is it not? . . . Do not be afraid. Nobody here will betray her."

I never knew the name of this good and faithful compatriot. If he is still alive I hope he will learn through these lines that my gratitude has often gone out and will always go out to him.

I arrived at last, safe and sound in Paris. I had nothing more to fear. I was in a hospitable country, protected by just laws.

It is common knowledge that shortly afterwards the most eminent French physicians recognized, after long interviews, when I was minutely interrogated and examined, the inanity of the pseudo-medical statements which had kept me in a lunatic asylum for seven years and caused me to be treated as a minor, incapable of managing my own affairs. My civil rights were restored to me; together with my liberty I had miraculously recovered my reason!

But I found again, alas! during the dreadful war, evidences of the implacable hatred from which I had suffered so much.

This time my enemies thought me in their power, and behaved in an odiously grasping manner. It was not now covetousness for the millions of my inheritance from my

father the King, but it was greed for another fortune, that of the Empress Charlotte, my unfortunate aunt, whose old age is sheltered by the Château of Boucottes. This fresh possibility of wealth aroused the same covetousness, and, as of old, it produced the same line of conduct. But once again I was providentially saved.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Death of the King—Intrigues and Legal Proceedings

A CERTAIN book exists of which only 110 copies have been printed, and these have been carefully distributed among those who were unlikely to mislay them.

This book, of which I deplore the fact that a greater number of copies were not printed, contains all the evidence concerning Niederfullbach, and the various judgments against my claims. Such as it is, and for the sake of what it contains and does not contain, I should be glad to see this book in the colleges and schools of Law throughout the world. It would be both useful and suggestive. Also if it were under the eyes of the general public it would doubtless be consulted with great interest.

What reflections would it not inspire, not only amongst jurists, but still more amongst deep thinkers, historians and writers, to see documents which throw new light on a century, a people and a man.

What would not be found hidden in high-sounding words and enormous figures! What a prodigious part is played in this book by a gifted spirit surrounded by collaborators devoted to his greatness so long as he lived, but who, enriched and satisfied, forgot his work and his name when once he was dead.

" Gratitude," said Jules Sandeau, " is like those perfumes of the East which retain their strength when kept in vessels of gold, but lose it when placed in vessels of lead."

There are few golden vessels amongst men. There are vases which seem to glow with this precious metal, but which are really made of the worst kind of lead. Appearances are mostly deceitful.

The book which I should like to see more widely circulated, is a large volume bound in green cardboard, printed at Brussels under the title, " The Account of The Inheritance of His Majesty Leopold II—Documents published by the Belgian State."

One of the best-known French lawyers wrote to me concerning this work:

" It is a great treasure, an inexhaustible mine. Some day lovers of Right, the young and old of every country, will publish essays and works inspired by the documents concerning the estate of King Leopold II. They are priceless. Here are to be found a glowing romance of business, of magnificent conceptions, of astonishing forms of contracts, of statutes and entails, and finally a marvellous judicial discussion where morality and immorality are at variance. The whole terminates in a fantastic judgment, preceded and followed by stupefying transactions.

" It was thought that this lawsuit was finished. It will recommence and perhaps continue for a hundred years, under various forms and under certain conditions which

cannot be foretold. It is impossible that the menace by Belgian justice against natural rights will be accepted and remain unchallenged."

If, as will be seen presently, it is indisputable that the King freely made over the Congo to Belgium, a possession which originally was secured by his money and under his direct superintendence, Reason must admit that such a gift could not have been accepted without Belgium, on her side, incurring some indebtedness to the family of the Sovereign, principally to his children.

That the donor may have wished to exclude his daughters from his real estate is not to be disputed, but that he could do so in justice is not presumable, and this action will never be admitted. To agree to such an iniquity would mean a conflict with that sacred principle which forms the basis of the continuity of the family.

I will now quote the opinion of a lawyer. His brother lawyers who read these lines will know him. I could quote a thousand opinions. But one will suffice: that of a Belgian lawyer, who was powerful enough to obtain "in the name of the State" what can only be called a sacrilegious judgment.

On the evening before the judgment which settled in my person the defeat of Law and Justice, one of my principal lawyers at Brussels was so sure of success that he telegraphed to one of my counsel, whose advice had been of great value: "Congratulations in anticipation."

How could this be doubted? The public prosecutor,

a real lawyer, had summed up in my favour. He was an honest man. He saved the honour of Belgian justice on this eventful day.

My leading Belgian counsel was so convinced of not being beaten that he was opposed to a compromise, which was then perhaps possible, and I agreed. For I (who had appeared so many times before the courts) had a horror of legal proceedings. Here, as elsewhere, I have been seized and crushed in a fatal cogwheel. It would be easy to prove it. But the interest does not lie there; it lies in the extraordinary struggle which I have had to sustain, almost alone, in the lawsuit concerning the King's estate.

My sister Clémentine, who perhaps had not read Hippolyte Taine, yielded to dynastic illusions, and unhesitatingly sacrificed her claims. She accepted from the Belgian Government that which the State was pleased to offer her. She did not take into consideration the fact that she ought to join forces with her sisters. The Belgian motto is "Union is strength." This motto is not applicable to all Belgian families!

My sister Stéphanie at first sided with me, then she backed out, then she came in with me, and again she backed out. . . .

I remained firm in my mistake—if it be thought a mistake. I knew at least what I wanted. My younger sister was not so sure. That is her affair. It cannot be counted against me that my cause, being that of the right, was not always hers.

I trust that I may be believed; I only struggled for

justice. Nobody can possibly say what I should have done had I won.

As regards the Congo, it was never my intention to pretend that my sisters and I could possibly dispute the wishes of the King and the laws passed in Belgium for taking over the colony. But, between the conflict of certain points at issue and the acceptance of a disinheritance against nature and against legality, a space existed which could have been, and should have been, bridged by an honourable settlement.

The Belgian State had one proposition to make, which it timidly outlined. My leading counsel did not consider this sufficient. The Belgian people, left to themselves, would have known better how to act, and how to honour the memory of Leopold II, but this duty was delegated to those who, to this day, have wilfully and lamentably failed.

Let us consider Belgium as a human being, endowed with honour and reason, and jealous of the judgment of history and the esteem of the world; mistress of millions of Congolese and of other millions of colonial treasure. As a reasoning being, would she have considered herself free from all obligations towards the unfortunate children of the giver of these gifts? Most assuredly not.

If she thought otherwise she would be without honour, without reason, a cruel cynic, justly mistrusted by all right-minded people. All the decrees in the world would never make her otherwise.

I have reasoned this out, and I still adhere to my view

I was not alone in this opinion. My Belgian lawyers had other opinions besides mine, and believed them to be conclusive.

If I have not succeeded in proving my case I have had, at least, the satisfaction of knowing that my lawyers have lost nothing.

My case brought them luck. They eventually became Ministers, men to be envied in every way, who are proud of having defended me.

But let us turn to the written words; they are more eloquent than any of mine. I only wish to be sincere. Here, as elsewhere, I say exactly what I think. I do not gloss over or twist things round. I only restrain myself from being too vehement. You see me as I am.

I express myself as if I were standing in the presence of the King. I wish to reach my father's spirit, commune with his soul, and convince him in the invisible world that my claims were just.

At the commencement of these pages I have placed his name, which has remained dear to my respect as a daughter. I was never able, and I never dared discuss matters with this father who was so deceived and misinformed about me.

* * * * *

On December 18, 1909, the *Moniteur* published the following statement:

"The Belgian nation has lost its King!

"The son of an illustrious sovereign, whose memory will remain for ever as a venerated symbol of constitutional monarchy, Leopold II, after a reign of forty-five years, has

died in harness, having, up to his last hour, devoted the best of his life and strength to the aggrandizement and prosperity of the country.

"On December 17, 1865, before the reunited Chambers, the King pronounced these memorable words, which since then have often been recalled:

"'If I do not promise Belgium either a great reign like that of the King who founded her independence, or to be a noble King like him whom we now lament, I promise at least that I will prove myself a King whose whole life will be devoted to the service of Belgium.'

"We know with what powerful energy he has kept and even exceeded this solemn promise.

"The creation of the African State which to-day forms the Belgian Colony of the Congo was the personal work of the King, and constitutes a unique achievement in the annals of history.

"Posterity will say that his was a great reign, and that he was a great King.

"The country now mourning his loss must worthily honour one who has died leaving such a splendid record behind him.

"The country places all its hopes in the loyal co-operation, already so happily manifested, of the Prince who has been called to preside over the destiny of Belgium.

"He will be inspired by the illustrious examples of those who became, by the help of Providence, the benefactors of the Belgian people.

"The Council of Ministers:

F. Schollaert, *Minister of the Interior and of Agriculture.*
Leon de Lantsheere, *Minister of Justice.*
J. Davignon, *Minister of Foreign Affairs.*
J. Liebaert, *Minister of Finance.*
Bon Descamps, *Minister of Science and Art.*
Arm. Hubert, *Minister of Industry and Labour.*
M. Delbeke, *Minister of Public Works.*
G. Hellepute, *Minister of Railways, Posts and Telegraphs.*
J. Hellepute, *Minister of War.*
J. Renkin, *Colonial Minister.*"

Of the signatories of this moving proclamation some are dead, others are still living.

To those who are no more, and to those who are still alive, I say:

"You have written and attested that the creation of the African State was the *personal* work of the King. In his *person*, then, you have recognized *the man, the head of the family*—and *therefore the family itself;* otherwise the word *personal* is without meaning. . . . And, as a matter of fact, it has suddenly lost its meaning. The King, now an entity without terrestrial chains, has enriched Belgium to the exclusion of his children, who are declared non-existent.

"And how, with or without you, has he been honoured?

"In continuing the endowment of Niederfullbach and other creations of this gifted benefactor?

"Ah! In no way whatever!

"You have liquidated, realized, destroyed and abandoned all that he conceived and ordered. I do not wish to describe in detail all that has passed, and I have no desire to touch on the sadness connected with the secrets of Niederfullbach and other works of the King, from the day when they ceased to be under his direction. I will take my stand on the ground of the sin against morality which most concerns me.

"Eleven years have passed since the death of the 'Great King.' Where is the monument erected to his memory?

" The people of Ostend, who owe to him the prosperity and beauty of their town, have not even dared to show an example of their gratitude. They are afraid of vexing the ungrateful people of Brussels, who prefer silence."

His wishes with respect to the Congo and his heirs are in three documents, which I append below:

First:

(1) An explanatory letter of the King, dated June 3, 1906, in testamentary form.

(Attached to exhibit No. 36 in the collection published by the Belgian Government.)

" I undertook, more than twenty years ago, the work of the Congo in the interests of civilization and for the benefit of Belgium. It was in the realization of this double aim that I annexed the Congo to my country in 1889.

"Cognizant with all the ideas which governed the foundation of the independent State, and which inspired the Act of Berlin, I am anxious to specify, in the interests of the nation, the wishes expressed in my will.

"The title of Belgium to the possession of the Congo is due to my double initiative, namely the rights which I acquired in Africa, and the uses which I have made of these rights in favour of my country.

"This situation imposed on me the obligation of ensuring, in accordance with my initial and dominant idea, that my legacy should prove useful in the future to civilization and to Belgium.

"In consequence thereof I wish to make the following points clear—points which are in perfect harmony with my immutable wish to assure to my beloved country the fruits of the work which I have pursued for long years in the continent of Africa, with the general consent of most of my subjects:

"Upon taking possession of the sovereignty of the Congo, with all the benefits, rights and advantages attached thereto, my legatee will assume, as is only just and necessary, the

obligation of respecting all the engagements of the State assigned to third parties, and likewise to respect all acts which I have established touching the privileges of the natives for donations for land, for the endowment of philanthropic or religious works, for the foundation of the domain of the Crown, for the establishment of the natural domain, as well as the obligation not to lessen by any measure the rights of the revenues of these various institutions without giving at the same time an equivalent compensation. I consider the observation of these rules as essential to assure to the sovereignty of the Congo the resources and the power indispensable for the accomplishment of the task.

"In voluntarily surrendering the Congo and the benefits derived therefrom in favour of Belgium, I must, without adding to the national obligation, strive to ensure to Belgium the perpetuity of the benefits which I bequeath her.

"I wish to state definitely that the legacy of the Congo to Belgium should always be maintained by her in its integrity. In consequence, the territory bequeathed will be inalienable under the same conditions as Belgian territory.

"I do not hesitate to specify this inalienability, for I know how great is the value of the Congo, and I have, in consequence, the conviction that this possession will never cost the Belgian nation any lasting sacrifice.

"(Signed) LEOPOLD.

"*Brussels, June* 3, 1906."

Having read this, no really right-minded person can deny that the King speaks of the Congo as private property which he surrenders voluntarily to Belgium, which he was quite at liberty to do, and which Belgium was equally at liberty to accept as a Royal gift.

But there is no right without duty.

I ask whether it was right of the Belgian Government to ruin me, an exile and a prisoner, calumniated and mistrusted; to deny me my Belgian nationality, and to sequestrate the little money left me in Belgium?

This, I have said before, was, I believe, the fatal result of a general measure, misinterpreted perhaps by an inexpert official.

But let it go!!

I only ask whether the Belgian Government can assert to-day that it has fulfilled the conditions imposed on it by its benefactor, and especially "the obligation to respect the integrity of the revenues of the various institutions" established by the King in favour of the Congo.

I await an answer. I now come to the question of the Will.

WILL OF THE KING. (Document No. 42.)

"This is my will.

"I inherited from my parents fifteen millions. These fifteen millions I have scrupulously kept intact, in spite of many vicissitudes.

"I possess nothing else.

"After my death these fifteen millions become the property of my heirs and must be made over to them by the executor of my will, to be divided between them.

"I die in the Catholic religion, to which I belong; I wish no post-mortem to be made; I wish to be buried without pomp in the early morning.

"Except my nephew Albert and the members of my household, no person is to follow my remains.

"May God protect Belgium, and may He in His goodness be merciful to me.

"(Sgd.) LEOPOLD.

"*Brussels, November* 20, 1907."

A great deal has been written about this Will. The statement "I possess nothing" except the declared fifteen millions caused the ink to flow.

The statement itself was proved untrue on the death of

the King, since in the abundance of wealth of all sorts which was found, the Belgian Government was obliged to specify as " litigious " certain shares and moneys which it could not take over, and which it left to my sisters and to myself. These shares and moneys have nearly doubled the fortune bequeathed us by our father.

Let no one say : " The fortune was considerable." As a statement it is true. But it must not be forgotten that everything is comparative, and that if I explain a point of succession which is unique in history it is not because I am avaricious. It is because I must insist, as a question of principle, to defend what I consider right, and to enlighten the public on a hitherto entangled and obscure discussion.

The second Will, reproduced below, merely states precisely the intention of the first :

THE OTHER WILL OF THE KING. (Document No. 49.)

"I have inherited from my mother and my father fifteen millions.

"I leave those to be divided amongst my children.

"Owing to my position and the confidence of various people, large sums have at certain times passed through my hands without belonging to me.

"I do not possess more than the fifteen millions mentioned above.

"(Sgd.) LEOPOLD.

"*Laeken, October* 18, 1908."

In this document the King said no more about having " scrupulously " saved the fifteen millions. A great deal has been written about this, because elsewhere the King often declared in his most formal manner that not only

had he used his own fortune, but also that of my aunt, the Empress Charlotte, in the Congo enterprise.

He might have lost all. If this had been the case, would Belgium have indemnified his children at his death? Certainly not! Fortunately Belgium has been the gainer.

Is it logical that the King's children should be objects of indifference to him?

To finish with the question of the fifteen millions, one fact remains which I cannot pass over, and which will suffice to invalidate the characteristic declaration of the King, if the discovery had not already been made at his death.

About this well-known fact everyone will guess beforehand what I could say. . . .

It is not wise to enlarge on this subject. Age is excusable in its errors, and the disposal of sixty millions will find many willing helpers.

But, truly, whom does one deceive, and by whom is one deceived? Virtuous airs are strangely a matter of circumstance with certain people who lend themselves to an astonishing favouritism, to the detriment of the natural heirs of the King.

However, let us forget this. Let us only remember the material point, which was that the King *wished* to disinherit his daughters.

Was it right and moral of Belgium to associate herself with this inhuman error and this illegality?

Ought she not to have assumed another line of conduct on behalf of myself and my sisters?

I ask it of the King as if he were alive and in the entire possession of his faculties; I ask this of the King who is now enlightened by death.

I ask it of my brave compatriots.

I ask it of the jurists of the entire world.

I ask it of history.

Let us put aside the millions of future generations and the hundreds of millions of the past.

I have renounced expectations and the promises of fairy tales more easily than most people. I would have liked to have made many people happy, to have helped beautiful works, to have created useful institutions. God knows all my dreams. He has decided that they should not be fulfilled, and I am resigned.

I have only wished to defend a principle and to obtain for myself a minimum of the possibilities of a free and honourable existence in accordance with my rank.

Was my action then unjustifiable?

What do certain documents—which it is easy to consult—establish, but which I cannot reproduce here without giving to these pages a different character from that I wish to give?

These documents prove that the *personal* fortune of the King had attained a minimum of twenty millions at the time of his last illness.

On the decease of the Sovereign this fortune, or the greater portion of it, had disappeared. My sisters and I had a round figure of twelve millions.

But what of the rest?

It has been said to us, and to me especially:

"What? You are complaining? By the terms of your father's will you should only have five millions. You have twelve millions, and you are not satisfied. You argue, you accuse, you incriminate! You are always at war with someone."

I am not at war with any particular person in this affair. I have simply upheld the right, and I believe it to be my duty.

The Government, the judge and the party opponents have told me, in fine-sounding sentences, that I was wrong.

Would they agree to submit their judgments to the final verdict of a tribunal composed of jurists from countries friendly to Belgium?

I renounce in advance the benefit of their decision if it should be in my favour.

Would they agree to accept an inquiry into the subject of the *real and personal* fortune of the King at the time of his death and what has become of it?

I know beforehand. These indiscreet questions will only meet with profound silence.

What consoles me in my misfortunes is the knowledge that the men in the confidence of the King have become wonderfully enriched. If my father could only leave fifteen millions I am confident that they, at any rate, will be able to leave much more. I am very pleased to think that this is so, as I find it only natural that merit, valour, conscientiousness and fidelity should be recompensed on earth.

I only regret one thing, which is common to human nature. Money, alas! does not tend to improve it. Instead it seems to harden the hearts of those who possess it.

How can the King's faithful servants and those of my family be at ease in palaces, where everything breathes comfort and luxury, when I am reduced to living as I am now obliged to live, practically from hand to mouth, uncertain to-day where to look to-morrow for sustenance, although within the grasp of two fortunes: one already mine by right of inheritance, and the other which I have every anticipation of inheriting?

People may say that instead of complaining I could continue to defend my rights, and it avails nothing to abuse the injustice of men. I do not ignore the fact that I have only to attack the Société des Sites, and the French property which the King has given to Belgium, for French justice, which is worthy of the name of justice, to condemn a fictitious society, whose so-called existence is not unwelcome to a Parisian lawyer and the servants of my family who have lent their name as circumstances required.

Law is law for everyone in France, and when the Société des Sites was founded in Paris, it was done with the most flagrant disregard of French legality.

I do not forget that the German law would equally condemn what transpired between Belgium and the administrators of Niederfullbach, if I were to attack these persons before the Justice of Germany, as I could easily do. The two Germans who are included in the list of administrators have sensed danger so strongly, owing to

their properties and positions being in Germany, that, in face of possible dangerous retaliations, they have sheltered themselves behind the Belgium State by the " arrangement " which they have accepted, and which has robbed my sisters and myself of considerable sums.

I also know that the Royal Gift of 1901 is open to an attack in Belgium, based on the material error committed over the question of the disposable share of the King's property. But, really, it is too painful for me to think about this and to go into these details. I only give certain of them in order to show that I have resisted, and I shall still resist, assuring myself that if I have not found justice in Belgium I shall find it elsewhere.

To speak with perfect frankness, I have suffered cruelly, and I still suffer on account of the strife in which I have been involved.

When I occasionally re-read the pleadings of the talented lawyers who defended or attacked me over the question of the King's inheritance, a sort of faintness overcomes me. Before so many words, in the face of so many reasons for and against, I feel that all things except equity can be expected of mankind.

It is positively stupefying for me to realize that three of my lawyers are Ministers, or are on the point of becoming Ministers, as I write these pages. I have only to take up their " pleadings " to hear the voice of their conscience proclaiming the justice of my cause, and accusing the State in which they are embodied to-day of collusion and fraud—in one word, of unqualified actions.

Do they not remember what they said, wrote and published? I listen in vain for some words from them. . . . Nothing . . . never a word. I am dead, so far as they are concerned.

I am unhappy. They know it, and they keep silence.

Never a thought, a memory for one who confided in them. They are in power—and I am in misery; they are living in their own country—I am an exile. They are *Men*, and I am a *Woman*. Oh, pettiness of the human soul!

I think again of all that has been said and written against me in the land of my birth for which I was sacrificed. What errors, what exaggerations, what passions, what ignorance concerning my real self! Nevertheless, taken as individuals, those who attack me and defame me are really good and brave men at heart. But they rend one's soul. Do they not understand what they do?

Has Belgium no conscience? She ranks so high to-day in the opinion of the world, that it seems impossible for her to expose herself to the diminution of her moral glory which will inevitably follow when History goes into the vexed question of the King's Inheritance, and its results in my own case. Can she rightly and peacefully enjoy that which has been unjustly obtained, or more or less greedily seized by her? History will find, as I find, certain ineffaceable words in the address to the Sénat by M. de Lantsheere, Minister of State, touching the Royal Gift of 1901, which all that was best in the Belgian soul then found inacceptable.

I reproduce these words for the contemplation and consideration of all honest men.

M. de Lantsheere spoke as follows in the Belgian Sénat on December 3, 1901, to contest the acceptance by the Chambre des Représentants of the King's Gift, and all that had privately enriched the King:

"I intend to remain faithful to a principle which King Leopold I always upheld and from which he never departed, one which I also upheld twenty-six years ago with M. Malou, M. Beernaert, and M. Delcour, Members of the Cabinet of which I had the honour to be a member—which MM. Hubert Dolez, d'Anethan and Notcomb, chief of those preceding me, who, like others after me, have equally upheld. This principle, which it has been reserved for the law to abandon for the first time, can be summed up in few words. *The common law is an indispensable support of the Royal Patrimony.* The present project offends Justice. . . . Two of the Royal princesses are married. From these marriages children have been born. Therefore families have been founded. These children have married in their turn, and have founded new families. These families may very reasonably have expected that nothing detrimental could happen to the hereditary rights which the Code declares unalienable from the descendants. . . . If, owing to some aberration of which you will give the first example . . . you do not respect the laws by which families are founded, . . . *one universal voice will be heard in Belgium which will curse the dominions which have enriched the nation at the expense of the King's children.* . . .

"Do you not think that it will look very disgraceful for Royalty to be exposed to the suspicion of wishing (under the cloak of liberality towards a country) to reserve the means, if not of disinheriting its descendants, at least of depriving them of that to which they are legally and morally entitled? I venture to believe that those persons will serve the interests of the State much more faithfully who insist that she must remain firm in her acceptance of the rights of Common Law, than those persons who uphold the acceptance of the disastrous

gift of an unlimited authority. I wish to ignore the possibility of any of these ulterior motives having entered the mind of His Majesty; you must ignore them if they have not already occurred to you; but I know that man's will is variable and certain laws are made in order to prevent possible injustice.

"If at the time of the King's death a point had been made of encroaching on the disposable funds, you would not have had the courage to lay the hand upon this patrimony. Why, then, do you forge weapons which, when the moment is ripe, you will blush to use?

"Therefore, Sirs, the uselessness of the project again reveals itself, as well as its equally odious and dangerous character . . . it is a juridical monstrosity. . . . It must never be said that in the Kingdom of Belgium any poor girl possesses more legal rights in her father's inheritance than the King's daughters now possess in the inheritance of their father." . . .

CHAPTER XIX

My Sufferings during the War

I WAS at Vienna when war was declared, and until actual hostilities commenced I could hardly believe such a thing was possible. The idea that the Emperor Francis Joseph, already with one foot in the grave, contemplated appearing as a combatant, after invariably suffering defeat, seemed sheer madness to me. It is true that a camarilla, acting under orders from Berlin, used the weakly old man as a tool. But that Berlin really wished to embark on a war which could not fail to cause a universal conflagration was incredible. It was worse than madness —it was a crime.

But the desire to kill carried away those in power at Berlin. I had a presentiment of a mysterious fatality which had laid its spell on Berlin and Vienna.

I wondered what would become of me. And each possible solution became more and more difficult. If, according to the views of my Belgian countrymen, I am unfortunate enough not to have regained my nationality in spite of the good sense and approval of the King my father, and once more denied the rights of justice and humanity, an action against which I protest most strongly, I was regarded from the first day of the war as an " enemy

subject" by the Court of Vienna, which was doubtless pleased to be able to hurt me in some new way.

I was asked to leave the Dual Monarchy as soon as possible. The Chief of the Police came in person to notify me of this decision. This distinguished functionary was in many respects courteous, but the order was extremely precise and formal.

I left for Belgium. But certain events detained me at Munich. The German Army barred the road, and my devoted country was soon to know the horrors of which the first responsibility rests with Prussia.

Until August 25, 1916, I was able to live in the capital of Bavaria, as a Belgian princess, without having to experience many of the inconveniences to which my position exposed me. The Bavarian Government was certainly indulgent. I was even allowed to retain a French maid who had been long in my service. The count—that devoted knight, whose proximity in my sad life had brought me consolation and unfailing support—was also allowed to be a member of my entourage.

But the German victories convinced my pitiless enemies that I should soon be at their mercy. They at once arranged their new plan of campaign!

I am proud to write this—proud to admit that the sufferings of Belgium were my own. She was oppressed. I was also the victim of oppression. She had lost all. I had also lost everything.

From day to day my resources became straitened, and the atmosphere, at first compassionate, became hostile. I

tried to efface myself as much as possible, and to submit myself patiently to the exigencies of my delicate situation. It was well known with whom my heart was in sympathy! Worries and harshness soon assailed me.

My son-in-law, Duke Gunther of Schleswig-Holstein, did not ignore—and with good reason—the difficulties I had to overcome. He lost no time in letting it be known that he considered I ought to agree to be placed under his guardianship, and forced to receive my last morsel of bread at his hands.

I do not wish to enlarge on the actions of this gentleman. If I were to publish the documents and the legal papers which I have kept, I should only add to the remorse and confusion which I should like to think have overcome my unhappy daughter. But, in duty to myself, I must relate a little of what transpired. Nothing else will suffice to show the drama which has enveloped me since the day when I represented the possible loss of a fortune to my family.

Duke Gunther of Schleswig-Holstein, from the very moment when Germany thought herself mistress of Belgium, occupied himself in ascertaining what might accrue to me from the inheritance of my father. Rather more than four and a half millions had been deposited in the bank, assigned for the benefit of my creditors, by arbitration of the tribunal which had been formed on the eve of hostilities.

This sum of money was the object of the touching solicitude of my son-in-law. I leave it to others to relate

his efforts to obtain possession of it and divert it into a different channel from the one for which it was intended.

Nevertheless, these four and a half millions were only a drop in the ocean compared with the promise of the past. My dear country can therefore rejoice, and I rejoice with her, that, by the victory of the Entente, she has escaped a revision of the lawsuit touching the Royal inheritance, one which would have been in direct opposition to the Divine and human right, at least as soon as the decree had been issued.

What crime would not then have been committed in my name in favour of the final triumph of German arms if, threatened with the pangs of starvation, I had signed certain renunciations which were extorted from me at Munich, and had thereby lost my personality and abandoned my rights to my children in consideration of a miserable pittance?

They now saw themselves likely to be compensated in some measure for all that had previously prevented them from acquiring the King's inheritance. They had also the certainty of possessing the thirty millions which represent my share of the fortune of Her Majesty the Empress Charlotte, when my unfortunate aunt succumbs beneath the burden of her advanced age.

My children—from the hour when they became aware of the frightful state of destitution to which I was reduced during the war—have only pursued one end: *without troubling to see me or to approach me directly*, they have

THE DUCHESS GUNTHER OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

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endeavoured by the mediation of paid agents to force me to sign a renunciation of my expectations.

In direct defiance of the law I was ordered to sign my name to a document by which I relinquished my future inheritance from the Empress to my children. At last, worn out with sufferings, I was on the point of consenting for a consideration of an annual payment of a sum of *six thousand marks*, in exchange for which I was to be reduced to isolation and slavery, and to be further plundered of all that might belong to me.

I will say nothing here to the Duke of Holstein, this soldier financier; but to my daughter Dora, the fruit of my body, whom I have fed at my breast, and whom I have brought up, I say this:

"You may possess all the outward appearances of respectability. You may enjoy the benefits of a fortune of which I know the source, you may experience neither shame nor remorse, you may even dare to pray. But God can never be deceived. No wickedness, no guilty complicity, no action contrary to Nature will escape His justice. Sooner or later He will judge all men according to their works."

Before I conclude my account of the machinations of these human vultures who attempted to assail my liberty and my rights, when once I had been unfortunate enough to ask help from my children, I must not forget to mention that later, when I regained the captaincy of my soul, I appealed to Justice at Munich. The courts there declared the renunciations extracted from me in my

misery and frenzy when I was starving and homeless to be invalid.

During the war I have often actually not known where I should sleep, or of what my next meal would consist.

I write this frankly, without a particle of false shame —firm in the approval of my own conscience.

I have never willingly injured anyone. I have suffered in silence. I am speaking to-day in my own defence, bringing as evidence a family drama which touches contemporary history. I speak with candour, but I am not actuated by feelings of hatred. Wickedness has diminished. But my personal sufferings have in nowise lessened. I was born a king's daughter, I shall die a king's daughter. I have certainly pleaded for assistance, but more on behalf of my attendants than for myself. I could not bear to see these devoted creatures, my comfort and support in my misery, weep and grow pale during these dark days.

The count had been obliged to leave Munich. On the morning of August 25, 1916, his room was suddenly invaded by the police. He was put in prison, then taken to Hungary, and afterwards interned near Budapest. He was by birth a Croatian and therefore regarded as a subject of the Entente, even before the defeat which united Croatia and Servia. Human justice is really only a word!

On the same day Olga, my principal attendant, an Austrian who had always shown me an invaluable and long-standing devotion, was also arrested. She was afterwards released. But I understood the significance of this

—the order had come from the highest authority to alienate everyone who cared for me. I will describe what followed.

My French maid, whose care of me was so disinterested, was interned. If my faithful Olga had not come out of prison, and if I had not had the means to keep her, I should have been completely isolated.

But, shortly after this, I really did not know how to supply my daily needs. My last jewels had been sold. I was now as poor as the poor souls who implored my charity.

What should I decide to do, what should I attempt? If I appealed to my daughter I knew that I should be up against the Duke of Holstein. He was absolutely pitiless. All this happened in July, 1917.

Providence now threw in my way an honourable man, a Swiss professor, who was terribly distressed at my fate.

He generously offered to help me to reach Silesia, where my daughter was in residence at one of her castles. This castle is not far from Breslau. I therefore left Munich, with Olga, in the hope of seeing my child and obtaining from her some temporary shelter.

But when I reached my journey's end I tried in vain to be received, listened to, and assisted by Dora.

I was therefore stranded in a little village in the Silesian mountains, where my last few marks soon disappeared.

The count had tried to send me the wherewithal to

exist. Without any warning, the German postal authorities retained the money and returned his letters.

The little inn where I had taken refuge was kept by kindly folk who were, however, unable to let me stop unless I could pay. I saw myself faced with the most extreme misery. The innkeeper seemed frightened of me. He told me that he had been ordered to render an account of my doings to the police, and that I was kept well under observation, although I might not be aware that this was the case.

He was mistaken. I and Olga had both noticed that our slightest movements were watched. Even in our walks in the open country we continually met some peasant or some pedestrian who appeared not to notice us, but who actually spied on us more or less unsuccessfully.

I felt the influence of an implacable force that wished to immure me in some new gaol, madhouse or prison, or which would perhaps even make me contemplate self-destruction.

In this extremity Heaven once again came to my rescue.

On the very day which I thought would be the last I should be allowed to stay at the inn, I sat down, miserably, on a bench in front of the house. I asked myself in despair what was to become of me. Suddenly a carriage appeared —a rare sight in that unfrequented region. The coachman signalled to me, and I saw, sitting in the carriage, a large, important-looking person who seemed looking for something or somebody.

He was looking for me!

I was soon acquainted with the fact that this gentleman had come from Budapest on behalf of the count, and wished to speak to me.

At these words I felt myself lifted out of the abyss of despair. But my trials were not over.

The count's confidential agent had been charged with the mission of helping me to leave Germany. In order to do this, it would be necessary to cross Austria into Hungary, where I could rely upon active sympathy being shown me.

Things and people had already changed in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy!

But, what possibilities such a journey presented! First, I had no official papers. The revelation of my name and title would alone suffice to impede my progress; I should be instantly detained.

But although, thanks to the count's messenger, my bill at the inn was settled, I had only very limited means at my disposal. Austria, it is true, was not far away. We could go there across the mountains by way of Bohemia, but the envoy declared that, owing to his shortness of breath and his troublesome legs, he could not possibly follow me over the goat tracks which we should most assuredly have to pass. He decided that our best plan was to make for Dresden, and from there to choose the easiest route.

When evening fell our host metaphorically closed his eyes to my departure. He waited until the next day to notify my disappearance to the authorities.

By the time he did so I was in Saxony. But here again it was too dangerous to go near Lindenhof in a kingdom where my misfortunes had been the subject of so much publicity. At last we remembered a little village close to the frontier, on the side nearest Munich, where the regime was less rigorous than in the vicinity of Dresden, and we arrived there without anything untoward happening.

The present difficulty was not so much in crossing Germany. It chiefly consisted in solving the question of the possibility of my being able to stay in some retired spot without my identity being discovered and notified, and afterwards to cross the frontier without a passport and gain safety at Budapest.

This Odyssey alone would make a volume. It terminated in a Bavarian village where I breathed freely once more. A good woman extended the kindest hospitality towards me and my faithful Olga.

The count's messenger still continued to watch over my welfare, and found accommodation for himself in the vicinity.

From my window I could see the church steeple of the Austrian village through which I must pass in order to reach Salzburg, Vienna and Hungary. I was now on the borders of the Promised Land. A little wood separated me from it, at the extremity of which flowed a brook well known to the contrabandists, since it separated Bavaria from Austria, and served them by night as a means of transit.

I dared not risk it! It would be necessary for me to cross a bridge constantly guarded by a sentry. But once over the bridge I should have left Germany behind me!

When I happened to be near Munich, I had regained possession of two favourite dogs. My love of dogs is well known. I did not wish to be separated from these, and I had an intuition that they would be of use to me in my flight. I thought tenderly of the clever Kiki, now a prisoner at Bad-Elster. His successors, like himself, would surely bring me luck! One was a big sheep-dog, the other a little griffon.

At first I hesitated to go near the bridge for fear lest I should be recognized. Then I reflected that it would seem suspicious to a sentry on duty if I always remained some distance away. My best method would be not to hide from the sentries, but to walk constantly with my dogs in their proximity. The soldiers (the same ones were always on duty) would soon get accustomed to seeing me, and in their eyes I should only represent an inoffensive inhabitant of the village.

The count's envoy begged me to hasten my departure. I refused. He advised a nocturnal flight. I did not agree with him. I said: "I shall go when I see fit, at my own time, when I *feel* that the propitious moment has arrived."

It is curious, but it is nevertheless true, that I always experience a weird kind of intuition under difficulties. It is exactly as if some inner voice advised me what course to pursue. And whenever I have obeyed this intuition I have always been right.

One morning I awakened under the domination of my unseen guide.

"You must leave at noon to-day."

I sent at once to the count's messenger. Thanks to his official papers he was able to cross the frontier with Olga without any difficulty. They therefore went on in advance. I arranged to meet them at the foot of the belfry in the Austrian village—so near and yet so far.

If the sentry stopped me and questioned me, I should be a prisoner! . . .

Towards noon I strolled along by the side of the brook, my big dog jumping round me, the tiny griffon in my arms. The autumnal sun was quite fierce, and the sentry was standing in the shade a little distance from the bridge. I sauntered across the bridge, as if it were a matter of course. The soldier took no notice. I walked away unconcernedly, but my heart was beating furiously! I was in Austria at last! Upon reaching the village I rejoined my "suite." A carriage was waiting. I drove to Salzburg, and put up at a small hotel where I knew I should be in temporary security.

I waited three days for the arrival of my Viennese counsel, M. Stimmer, who had been secretly advised of my return to Austria, and of my wish to proceed to Budapest under his protection.

M. Stimmer responded to my appeal. He waived all the legal difficulties which might arise from the situation. The voice of humanity spoke more strongly than the voice of obedience to the order which had banished me from

Austria, and given me over to the power of Germany, where I should inevitably have succumbed to misery and persecution.

But in Hungary I should stand a chance of knowing happier days. M. Stimmer decided to accompany me thither.

I had reached the limit of my endurance when my wanderings came to an end at Budapest, and I found myself in a comfortable first-class hotel. The authorities saw nothing compromising in my presence. At my urgent request the count was allowed to leave the small town where he was interned, and remain near me for several days in order to discuss my affairs.

Unfortunately the war was hopelessly prolonged. Life gradually became more and more difficult. Austria and Hungary were no longer the victims of illusion. Enlightened by the knowledge of defeat, they cursed Berlin as the author of their misfortunes. Budapest was in a state of ferment.

All at once everything collapsed. The wind of Bolshevism swept furiously over the Dual Monarchy. I now became familiar with the commissaries and soldiers of the Revolution. I experienced visits of inspection, perquisitions, interrogations. But suddenly my misfortunes disarmed even the savage leaders of Hungarian Communism. I have already mentioned how one of these men remarked when he saw to what poverty I was reduced : " Here is a king's daughter who is poorer than I am."

If I were to live for centuries, I should still experience

in thought those poignant emotions which I underwent during the time of torment which overthrew thrones and threw crowns to the four winds of heaven. Past ages have never witnessed such an upheaval.

On the banks of the Danube, between the east and the west, the downfall of Prussian power and the prestige of Monarchy was felt perhaps more keenly than elsewhere.

I often wondered whether I was actually alive in the world I had formerly known, or if I was not the victim of a long-drawn-out nightmare.

Our troubles, our worries, our own individuality are as naught in the whirlpool of human passions. I felt myself carried away with everything which surrounded me into the unknown country of a New Era.

CHAPTER XX

In the Hope of Rest

AND now that I have said all that I think is indispensable, perhaps my readers will make excuses for me if I have expressed myself badly in narrating the story of my sufferings.

They will, perhaps, also make excuses for my having broken the silence which I have hitherto maintained.

There has been endless discussion concerning me and my affairs. I have not wished it, I have not inspired it. It has arisen solely through force of circumstances.

We are powerless against circumstances. Our lives seem to be influenced more by others than by ourselves, and the fatality which often orders our actions and our days is not our choice.

A moment's folly can wreck a whole life. This has been my personal experience. But I think that at first I was the person deceived, because I was not old enough to judge rightly and to see clearly.

Can I grow old without obeying the duty to defend the truth, which has been so outraged by my enemies? Can I go down to the grave, misunderstood and slandered?

My life represents a succession of fatalities of which I was powerless to avert the final *dénouement.*

I have already said, and I repeat, I do not hold myself guiltless of errors, faults and wrongdoings. But one must, in justice, seek their primary cause in my disastrous marriage.

My parents—particularly the Queen—saw nothing wrong in giving me to the Prince of Coburg when I was hardly more than a child.

The King saw in this marriage the possibility of certain influences and a political union which would be useful to himself and to Belgium.

The Queen was overjoyed at the thought that I was to make my home in Austria and Hungary, whence she had herself come, and where I should remember her, and at the same time further my country's glory and the King's ambitions.

I have been sacrificed for the good of Belgium, and Belgium now includes Belgians who reproach me for the gift of my youth and happiness essentially destined for their benefit! Belgians to-day regard me as a German, a Hungarian—a foreigner—and worse even than that! Alas for human gratitude!

Be that as it may, am I guilty of having voluntarily abandoned my country or of ceasing to love it?

The whole of my being protests against this vile accusation.

Of what then am I guilty? Of having left my husband and my children?

I lived for twenty years at the most corrupt Court of Europe. I never yielded to its temptations or its follies.

In the Hope of Rest

I gave birth to a son and a daughter, I suckled them at my breast, and I reposed all my hopes of a mother in my children. My son's fate and how he left me is common knowledge. It is also well known how my daughter, influenced by her husband and her environment, has treated me.

Of what was I actually guilty? It is true that finding myself at the end of my courage, and suffocating in the atmosphere of a home which for me was detestable, I was about to succumb. . . .

I was rescued at this crisis, and I dedicated my life to my deliverer. And, in consequence, my saviour was branded as a forger, and by dint of monetary persecutions and fines it was sought to annihilate him.

Both of us have escaped from the murderers who desired our destruction.

Am I guilty of having struggled, of having remained faithful to fidelity, and of having resisted the efforts to overthrow me?

The judgments of error and hatred matter little to me. I have remained the woman that I promised my sainted mother I would become—the idealist, who has lived on the heights.

Am I guilty in the real meaning of morality and freedom? Many women who consider themselves in a position to cast the first stone at me have far more with which to reproach themselves!

What remains to be said?

This. . . . I believed, I believed in common with the

greatest legal minds, that in the ordinary course of events I should inherit a fortune from my father. My inheritance was considerably encumbered and reduced owing to fraudulent schemes and wrongful judgments, which have been universally condemned.

Am I guilty for having been deceived and plundered?

Again it is said that my family was not united. Is this my fault?

I always loved my flesh and blood more than myself. Have I been found wanting in affection and respect towards my parents? Was I not to my sisters the adoring eldest sister who loved and cherished them?

Am I guilty of the errors of the King and the Queen, the latter convinced by my persecutors of the gravity of my "illness," the former irritated—not by my independence, but by the scandal that it created?

Am I guilty of the selfishness of my sisters—one the victim of narrow-mindedness, the other the victim of political schemes?

I freely admit this: I have certainly rebelled against disloyalty and restraint. But for what motives? For what ends?

My real crime has consisted in my effort to get my own property, in waiting for a fortune which I have not handled.

The world only admires the victorious, no matter by what means they achieve victory.

I have been a victim ever since my girlish feet were led into devious paths; I have always suffered defeat.

In the Hope of Rest

When the battle was over I did not ask pardon of untruth, injury, theft, or persecution.

I might have been alone, I might have fallen under the burden of infamy and violence. But I would not yield because I was not fighting for myself alone.

God has visibly sustained me, by animating my heart with feelings of esteem and gratitude for a chivalrous soul whom I have never heard utter a word of complaint, no matter how atrocious the intrigues and the cruelties which encompassed him.

A base world has judged his devotion and my constancy from the lowest standpoint.

Let such a world now realize that beings exist who are far above the sordid instincts to which humanity abandons itself, beings who, in a common aspiration to a lofty ideal, rise superior to all earthly weaknesses. The last lines of this short sketch of a life, the details of which would fill many volumes, must be a recognition of my gratitude towards Count Geza Mattachich.

I have not said a great deal about him, because he will think that even a little is too much. This silent man only appreciates silence.

"Silence alone is strong, all the rest is weakness." Thus wrote Alfred de Vigny, and this line is the motto of the strong.

But you know, Count, that unlike you I cannot force myself to be silent. I wish to invoke the vision of the hour when you first spoke those words which penetrated my conscience and cleansed and illumined it. From

that hour, this light has been my guide. I have sought in suffering the road towards spiritual beauty. But you preceded me thither, and in the dark depths of the madhouse I looked towards your prison cell, and in so doing I escaped the horrors of insanity.

We have had to submit to the assaults of covetousness and hypocrisy.

We have struggled in the mire; we have been separated in wild lands. The world has only seen the splashes of mud and the tattered banner of our combat. It has ignored the cause, and its malevolence has never pardoned us for emerging from the fight as victims.

All this was very bitter at the time, but I never regret! My sufferings are dear to me because you, Count, have shared them, after having tried so ardently to spare me.

There is always a certain joy in bearing unmerited afflictions in the spirit of sacrifice.

This spirit of sacrifice is peculiarly your own. I never possessed it. But you have endowed me with it. No gift has ever been so precious to my soul, and I shall be grateful to you on this side of the tomb and beyond it!

I, who alone know you as you really are, and know the adoration that has given you a reason for living, I thank you, Count, in the twilight of my days for the nobility which you have always shown in this adoration. Shall I ever know, will you ever know, the meaning of rest otherwise than the last rest which is the lot of mankind?

In the Hope of Rest

Will earthly justice ever render unto us the hoped-for reparations?

Will it be possible for us to remain outlawed from the truth, and crushed by the abuse of power and human wickedness?

Let it be as God wills!

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